



Engraved by J. Sartain

John Owen, D.D.

E. P. Wood

ON

TEMPTATION

AND THE

MORTIFICATION OF SIN IN BELIEVERS.

BY THE

✓
REV. JOHN OWEN, D.D.



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OF
T E M P T A T I O N ,

THE NATURE AND POWER OF IT, THE DANGER OF
ENTERING INTO IT, AND THE MEANS OF
PREVENTING THAT DANGER:

WITH

A RESOLUTION OF SUNDRY CASES THEREUNTO
BELONGING.

BY THE REV. JOHN OWEN, D. D.

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”—REV. iii. 10.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

BY THE REV. W. H. GOOLD, EDINBURGH.

THIS small work of Dr. Owen on "Temptation" appeared in 1658. He had been urged to publish it by the solicitations of friends to whose opinion he paid deference. The probability is, that they had already heard the substance of it in discourses from the pulpit; and, from an expression in the closing exhortation (see p. 135), the discourses must have been delivered in Oxford. The motives of the author in committing it to the press are still further evinced in some allusions to the character of the times, which will be found both in the preface and in the treatise itself. The vigilant eye of Owen detected certain mischievous effects accruing from the eminent success which had attended hitherto the efforts of the party with whom he acted. The fear of a common danger had formerly kept them united in their views and movements, while it led them to depend upon the true source of all strength and hope. They were now sinking into those strifes and divisions which paved the way for the restoration of monarchy; and Owen speaks of "a visible declension from reformation seizing upon the professing party of these nations." There is a tone of indignant and yet pathetic faithfulness in his language, as he recurs to the subject of this declension in the body of the treatise: "He that should see the prevailing party of these nations, many of them in rule, power, and favour, with all their adherents, and remember that they were a colony of Puritans, whose habitation was in a 'low place,' as the prophet speaks of the city of God, translated by a high hand to the mountains they now possess, cannot but wonder how soon they have forgot the customs, manners, ways, of their own old people, and are cast into the mould of them that went before them in the places whereunto they are translated." Owen may have feared the issue of prevailing divisions, and anticipated the revival of the intolerant system which the patriotism of

the Long Parliament and the military genius of Cromwell overthrew. Under the impression that an hour of temptation had come, and that the best security for religious principles was the advancement of personal godliness, he published the following treatise.

Whatever motives incited him to the preparation of it, the whole work, with the exception of a few paragraphs, might have been written, with set purpose, for the people of God in every age. In no work is the sound judgment of our author more conspicuous. He avoids all fanciful speculations into the mysteries of satanic agency, such as were too common on this theme. He is too much in earnest that his readers should be brought into a condition of safety against the wiles of the devil, to break the force of his warnings and entreaties by ingenious speculations and irrelevant learning. Not merely in the warm appeals interspersed with his expositions, but in the patient care with which no nook of the heart is left unsearched, does the deep solicitude of Owen for the spiritual welfare of his readers appear. To one who reads the treatise in the spirit with which the author wrote it,—simply that he may judge his own heart, and know what temptation means, and be fully on his guard against it,—the effect is far beyond what the mere wealth of fancy or the arts of rhetoric could produce.

From the text, Matt. xxvi. 41, the author considers in succession three topics educed from it:—temptation, the means by which it prevails, and the way of preventing it. The most of the treatise is occupied with the last topic,—the means of prevention. It is subdivided into inquiries,—as to the evidence by which a man may know that he has entered into temptation, the directions requisite to prevent him entering into it, and the seasons when temptation may be apprehended. The discussion of this last inquiry merges very much into an illustration of the Christian duty of watchfulness, and the treatise is closed by a general exhortation to this duty. Slight defects in the arrangement, the renewed discussion of a point after it had been quitted, and the disproportionate space accorded to some parts of the subject, are explained, perhaps, by the circumstance that the treatise was originally a series of discourses.

TO THE READER.

CHRISTIAN READER—If thou art in any measure awake in these days wherein we live, and hast taken notice of the manifold, great, and various temptations wherewith all sorts of persons that know the Lord and profess his name are beset, and whereunto they are continually exposed, with what success those temptations have obtained, to the unspeakable scandal of the gospel, with the wounding and ruin of innumerable souls, I suppose thou wilt not inquire any further after other reasons of the publishing of the ensuing warnings and directions, being suited to the times that pass over us, and thine own concernment in them. This I shall only say to those who think meet to persist in any such inquiry, that though my first engagement for the exposing of these meditations unto public view did arise from the desires of some, whose avouching the interest of Christ in the world by personal holiness and constant adhering to everything that is made precious by its relation to him, have given them power over me to require at any time services of greater importance; yet I dare not lay my doing of it so upon that account, as in the least to intimate that, with respect to the general state of things mentioned, I did not myself esteem it seasonable and necessary. The variety of outward providences and dispensations wherewith I have myself been exercised in this world, with the inward trials they have been attended withal, added to the observation that I have had advantages to make of the ways and walkings of others,—their beginnings, progresses, and endings, their risings and falls, in profession and conversation, in darkness and light,—have left such a constant sense and impression of the power and danger of temptations upon my mind and spirit, that, without other pleas and pretences, I cannot but own a serious call unto men to beware, with a discovery of some of the most eminent ways and means of the prevalency of present temptations, to have been, in my own judgment, in this season needful.

But now, reader, if thou art amongst them, who takest no notice of these things, or carest not for them,—who hast no sense of the efficacy and dangers of temptations in thine own walking and profession, nor hast observed the power of them upon others,—who discernest not the manifold advantages that they have got in these days, wherein all things are shaken, nor hast been troubled or moved for the sad successes they have had amongst professors; but supposest that all things are well within doors and without, and would be better couldst thou obtain fuller satisfaction to some of thy lusts in the pleasures or profits of the world,

—I desire thee to know that I write not for thee, nor do esteem thee a fit reader or judge of what is here written. Whilst all the issues of providential dispensations, in reference to the public concerns of these nations, are perplexed and entangled, the footsteps of God lying in the deep, where his paths are not known; whilst, in particular, unparalleled distresses and strange prosperities are measured out to men, yea, to professors; whilst a spirit of error, giddiness, and delusion goes forth with such strength and efficacy, as it seems to have received a commission to go and prosper; whilst there are such divisions, strifes, emulations, attended with such evil surmises, wrath, and revenge, found amongst brethren; whilst the desperate issues and products of men's temptations are seen daily in partial and total apostasy, in the decay of love, the overthrow of faith, our days being filled with fearful examples of backsliding, such as former ages never knew; whilst there is a visible declension from reformation seizing upon the professing party of these nations, both as to personal holiness and zeal for the interest of Christ;—he that understands not that there is an “hour of temptation” come upon the world, to “try them that dwell upon the earth,” is doubtless either himself at present captivated under the power of some woful lust, corruption, or temptation, or is indeed stark blind, and knows not at all what it is to serve God in temptations. With such, then, I have not at present to do. For those who have in general a sense of these things,—who also, in some measure, are able to consider that the plague is begun, that they may be further awakened to look about them, lest the infection have approached nearer to them, by some secret and imperceptible ways, than they did apprehend; or lest they should be surprised at unawares hereafter by any of those temptations that in these days either waste at noon or else walk in darkness,—is the ensuing warning intended. And for the sake of them that mourn in secret for all the abominations that are found among and upon them that profess the gospel, and who are under the conduct of the Captain of their salvation, fighting and resisting the power of temptations, from what spring soever they rise in themselves, are the ensuing directions proposed to consideration.

That our faithful and merciful High Priest, who both suffered and was tempted, and is on that account touched with the feeling of our infirmities, would accompany this small discourse with seasonable supplies of his Spirit and suitable mercy to them that shall consider it, that it may be useful to his servants for the ends whereunto it is designed, is the prayer of him who received this handful of seed from his storehouse and treasure,

JOHN OWEN.

OF TEMPTATION:

THE NATURE AND POWER OF IT, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

The words of the text, that are the foundation of the ensuing discourse—The occasion of the words, with their dependence—The things specially aimed at in them—Things considerable in the words as to the general purpose in hand—Of the general nature of temptation, wherein it consists—The special nature of temptation—Temptation taken actively and passively—How God tempts any—His ends in so doing—The way whereby he doth it—Of temptation in its special nature: of the actions of it—The true nature of temptation stated.

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”—MATT. xxvi. 41.

THESE words of our Saviour are repeated with very little alteration in three evangelists; only, whereas Matthew and Mark have recorded them as above written, Luke reporteth them thus: “Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation;” so that the whole of his caution seems to have been, “Arise, watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”

Solomon tells us of some that “lie down on the top of a mast in the midst of the sea,” Prov. xxiii. 34,—men overborne by security in the mouth of destruction. If

ever poor souls lay down on the top of a mast in the midst of the sea, these disciples with our Saviour in the garden did so. Their Master, at a little distance from them, was "offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears," Heb. v. 7, being then taking into his hand and beginning to taste* that cup that was filled with the curse and wrath due to their sins;—the Jews, armed for *his* and *their* destruction, being but a little more distant from them, on the other hand. Our Saviour had a little before informed them that that night he should be betrayed, and be delivered up to be slain; they saw that he was "sorrowful, and very heavy," Matt. xxvi. 37; nay, he told them plainly that his "soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," verse 38, and therefore entreated them to tarry and watch with him, now he was dying, and that for them. In this condition, leaving them but a little space, like men forsaken of all love towards him or care of themselves, they fell fast asleep! Even the best of saints, being left to themselves, will quickly appear to be less than men,—to be nothing. All our own strength is weakness, and all our wisdom folly. Peter being one of them,—who but a little before had with so much self-confidence affirmed that though all men forsook him, yet he never would so do,—our Saviour expostulates the matter in particular with him: verse 40, "He saith unto Peter, Could ye not watch with me one hour?" as if he should have said, "Art thou he, Peter,

* Heb. ii. 9; Gal. iii. 13; 2 Cor. v. 21.

who but now boastedst of thy resolution never to forsake me? Is it likely that thou shouldst hold out therein, when thou canst not watch with me one hour? Is this thy dying for me, to be dead in security, when I am dying for thee?" And indeed it would be an amazing thing to consider that Peter should make so high a promise, and be immediately so careless and remiss in the pursuit of it, but that we find the root of the same treachery abiding and working in our own hearts, and do see the fruit of it brought forth every day, the most noble engagements unto obedience quickly ending in deplorable negligence, Rom. vii. 18.

In this estate our Saviour admonishes them of their condition, their weakness, their danger, and stirs them up to a prevention of that ruin which lay at the door: saith he, "Arise, watch and pray."

I shall not insist on the particular aimed at here by our Saviour, in this caution to them that were then present with him; the great temptation that was coming on them, from the scandal of the cross, was doubtless in his eye;—but I shall consider the words as containing a general direction to all the disciples of Christ, in their following of him throughout all generations.

There are three things in the words:—

I. The *evil* cautioned against,—*temptation*.

II. The *means* of its prevalency,—by our *entering into it*.

III. The *way* of preventing it,—*watch and pray*.

It is not in my thoughts to handle the common-place of temptations, but only the danger of them in general, with the means of preventing that danger; yet, that we may know what we affirm, and whereof we speak, some concernments of the general nature of temptation may be premised.

I. First, For the *general* nature of tempting and temptation, it lies among things indifferent; to try, to experiment, to prove, to pierce a vessel, that the liquor that is in it may be known, is as much as is signified by it. Hence God is said sometime to tempt; and we are commanded as our duty to tempt, or try, or search ourselves, to know what is in us, and to pray that God would do so also. So temptation is like a knife, that may either cut the meat or the throat of a man; it may be his food or his poison, his exercise or his destruction.

Secondly, Temptation in its *special* nature, as it denotes any evil, is considered either actively, as it *leads* to evil, or passively, as it *hath* an evil and suffering in it; so temptation is taken for affliction, James i. 2; for in that sense, we are to “count it all joy when we fall into temptation;” in the other, that we “enter not into it.”

Again, actively considered, it either denotes in the tempter a design for the bringing about of the special end of temptation, namely, *a leading into evil*; so it is said, that “God tempts no man,” James i. 13, with a design for sin as such;—or the general nature and end of temptation, which is trial; so “God tempted Abra-

ham," Gen. xxii. 1. And he proveth or tempteth by false prophets, Deut. xiii. 3.

Now, as to God's tempting of any, two things are to be considered:—1. The end why he doth it; 2. The way whereby he doth it.

1. For the first, his general ends are two:—

(1.) He doth it to *show* unto man what is in him,—that is, the man himself; and that either as to his grace or to his corruption. (I speak not now of it as it may have a place and bear a part in judiciary obduration). Grace and corruption lie deep in the heart; men oftentimes deceive themselves in the search after the one or the other of them. When we give vent to the soul, to try what grace is there, corruption comes out; and when we search for corruption, grace appears. So is the soul kept in uncertainty; we fail in our trials. God comes with a gauge that goes to the bottom. He sends his instruments of trial into the bowels and the inmost parts of the soul, and lets man see what is in him, of what metal he is constituted. Thus he tempted Abraham to show him his *faith*. Abraham knew not what faith he had (I mean, what power and vigour was in his faith), until God drew it out by that great trial and temptation.* When God says he knew it, he made Abraham know it. So he tried Hezekiah to discover his *pride*; God left him that he might see what was in his heart, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. He knew not that he had such a proud heart, so

* Gen. xxii. 12.

apt to be lifted up, as he appeared to have, until God tried him, and so let out his filth, and poured it out before his face. The issues of such discoveries to the saints, in thankfulness, humiliation, and treasuring up of experiences, I shall not treat of.

(2.) God doth it to *show himself* unto man, and that,—

[1.] In a way of *preventing grace*. A man shall see that it is God alone who keeps from all sin. Until we are tempted, we think we live on our own strength. Though all men do this or that, we will not. When the trial comes, we quickly see whence is our preservation, by standing or falling. So was it in the case of Abimelech, Gen. xx. 6, “I withheld thee.”

[2.] In a way of *renewing grace*. He would have the temptation continue with St. Paul, that he might reveal himself to him in the sufficiency of his renewing grace, 2 Cor. xii. 9. We know not the power and strength that God puts forth in our behalf, nor what is the sufficiency of his grace, until, comparing the temptation with our own weakness, it appears unto us. The efficacy of an antidote is found when poison hath been taken; and the preciousness of medicines is made known by diseases. We shall never know what strength there is in grace, if we know not what strength there is in temptation. We must be tried, that we may be made sensible of being preserved. And many other good and gracious ends he hath, which he accomplisheth towards his saints by his trials and temptations, not now to be insisted on.

2. For the ways whereby God accomplisheth this his search, trial, or temptation, these are some of them:—

(1.) He puts men on *great duties*, such as they cannot apprehend that they have any strength for, nor indeed have. So he tempted Abraham by calling him to that duty of *sacrificing his son*;—a thing absurd to reason, bitter to nature, and grievous to him on all accounts whatever. Many men know not what is in them, or rather what is ready for them, until they are put upon what seems utterly above their strength; indeed, upon what is really above their strength. The duties that God, in an ordinary way, requires at our hands, are not proportioned to what strength we have in ourselves, but to what help and relief is laid up for us in Christ; and we are to address ourselves to the greatest performances, with a settled persuasion that we have not ability for the least. This is the law of grace; but yet, when any duty is required that is extraordinary, that is a secret not often discovered in the yoke of Christ, it is a trial, a temptation.

(2.) By putting them upon *great sufferings*. How many have unexpectedly found strength to die at a stake, to endure tortures for Christ, yet their call to it was a trial. This, Peter tells us, is one way whereby we are brought into trying temptations, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. Our temptations arise from the “fiery trial;” and yet the end is but a trial of our faith.

(3.) By his providential disposing of things so as that

occasions unto sin will be administered unto men, which is the case mentioned, Deut. xiii. 3; and innumerable other instances may be adjoined.

Now, they are not properly the temptations of God, as coming from him, with his end upon them, that are here intended; and therefore I shall set these apart from our present consideration. It is, then, temptation in its special nature, as it denotes an *active efficiency towards sinning* (as it is managed with evil unto evil) that I intend.

In this sense temptation may proceed either singly from Satan, or the world, or other men in the world, or from ourselves, or jointly from all or some of them, in their several combinations:—

(1.) Satan tempts sometimes *singly* by himself, without taking advantage from the world, the things or persons of it, or ourselves. So he deals in his injection of evil and blasphemous thoughts of God into the hearts of the saints; which is his own work alone, without any advantage from the world or our own hearts: for nature will contribute nothing thereunto, nor any thing that is in the world, nor any man of the world; for none can conceive a God and conceive evil of him. Herein Satan is alone in the *sin*, and shall be so in the *punishment*. These fiery darts are prepared in the forge of his own malice, and shall, with all their venom and poison, be turned into his own heart for ever.

(2.) Sometimes he makes *use of the world*, and joins

forces against us, without any helps from within. So he tempted our Saviour, by showing him "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them."* And the variety of the assistances he finds from the world, in persons and things which I must not insist on,—the innumerable instruments and weapons he takes from thence of all sorts and at all seasons,—are inexpressible.

(3.) Sometimes he takes in *assistance from ourselves also*. It is not with us as it was with Christ when Satan came to tempt him. He declares that he "had nothing in him," John xiv. 30. It is otherwise with us: he hath, for the compassing of most of his ends, a sure party within our own breasts, James i. 14, 15. Thus he tempted Judas: he was at work *himself*; he put it into his heart to betray Christ; Luke xxii. 3, "he entered into him" for that purpose. And he sets the *world* at work, the things of it, providing for him "thirty pieces of silver" (verse 5, "They covenanted to give him money"); and the *men of it*, even the priests and the Pharisees; and calleth in the assistance of his *own corruption*,—he was covetous, "a thief, and had the bag."

I might also show how the world and our own corruptions do act singly by themselves, and jointly in conjunction with Satan and one another, in this business of temptation. But the truth is, the principles, ways, and means of temptations, the kinds, degrees, efficacy, and causes of them, are so inexpressibly large and various;

* Matt. iv. 8.

the circumstances of them, from providence, natures, conditions, spiritual and natural, with the particular cases thence arising, so innumerable and impossible to be comprised within any bound or order, that to attempt the giving an account of them would be to undertake that which would be endless. I shall content myself to give a description of the general nature of that which we are to watch against; which will make way for what I aim at.

Temptation, then, in general, is *any thing, state, way, or condition that, upon any account whatever, hath a force or efficacy to seduce, to draw the mind and heart of a man from that obedience, which God requires of him, into any sin, in any degree of it whatever.*

In particular, that is a temptation to any man which causes or occasions him to sin, or in anything to go off from his duty, either by *bringing* evil into his heart, or *drawing* out that evil that is in his heart, or any other way diverting him from communion with God, and that constant, equal, universal obedience, in matter and manner, that is required of him.

For the clearing of this description I shall only observe, that though temptation seems to be of a more active importance, and so to denote only the power of seduction to sin itself, yet in the Scripture it is commonly taken in a neuter sense, and denotes the matter of the temptation or the thing whereby we are tempted. And this is a ground of the description I have given of it. Be it what it will, that from anything whatever, within

us or without us, hath advantage to hinder in duty, or to provoke unto or in any way to occasion sin, that is a temptation, and so to be looked on. Be it business, employment, course of life, company, affections, nature, or corrupt design, relations, delights, name, reputation, esteem, abilities, parts or excellencies of body or mind, place, dignity, art,—so far as they further or occasion the promotion of the ends before mentioned, they are all of them no less truly temptations than the most violent solicitations of Satan or allurements of the world, and that soul lies at the brink of ruin who discerns it not. And this will be further discovered in our process.

CHAPTER II.

What it is to "enter into temptation"—Not barely being tempted—Not to be conquered by it—To fall into it—The force of that expression—Things required unto entering into temptation—Satan or lust more than ordinarily importunate—The soul's entanglement—Seasons of such entanglements discovered—Of the "hour of temptation," Rev. iii. 10, what it is—How any temptation comes to its hour—How it may be known when it is so come—The means of prevention prescribed by our Saviour—Of watching, and what is intended thereby—Of prayer.

II. HAVING showed what temptation is, I come, secondly, to manifest what it is to *enter* into temptation.

1. This is not merely to *be tempted*. It is impossible that we should be so freed from temptation as not to be at all tempted. Whilst Satan continues in his power and malice, whilst the world and lust are in being, we shall be tempted. "Christ," says one, "was made like unto us, that he might be tempted; and we are tempted that we may be made like unto Christ." Temptation in general is comprehensive of our whole warfare; as our Saviour calls the time of his ministry the time of his "temptations," Luke xxii. 28. We have no promise that we shall not be tempted at all; nor are we to pray for an absolute freedom from temptations, because we have no such promise of being heard therein. The direction we

have for our prayers is, "Lead us not into temptation," Matt. vi. 13; it is "entering into temptation" that we are to pray against. We may be tempted, yet not enter into temptation. So that,—

2. Something more is intended by this expression than the *ordinary work* of Satan and our own lusts, which will be sure to tempt us every day. There is something signal in this entering into temptation, that is not the saints' every day's work. It is something that befalls them peculiarly in reference to seduction unto sin, on one account or other, by the way of allurements or affrightment.

3. It is not *to be conquered* by a temptation, to fall down under it, to commit the sin or evil that we are tempted to, or to omit the duties that are opposed. A man may "enter into temptation," and yet not fall under temptation. God can make a way for a man to escape; when he is in, he can break the snare, tread down Satan, and make the soul more than a conqueror, though it have entered into temptation. Christ *entered* into it, but was not in the least *foiled* by it. But,—

4. It is, as the apostle expresseth it, 1 Tim. vi. 9, ἐμπίπτειν, "to fall into temptation," as a man falls into a pit or deep place where are gins or snares, wherewith he is entangled; the man is not presently killed and destroyed, but he is entangled and detained,—he knows not how to get free or be at liberty. So it is expressed again to the same purpose, 1 Cor. x. 13, "No temptation hath

taken you;" that is, to be taken by a temptation and to be tangled with it, held in its cords, not finding at present a way to escape. Thence saith Peter, 2 Epist. ii. 9, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." They are entangled with them; God knows how to deliver them out of them. When we suffer a temptation to enter into us, then we "enter into temptation." Whilst it knocks at the door we are at liberty; but when any temptation comes in and parleys with the heart, reasons with the mind, entices and allures the affections, be it a long or a short time, do it thus insensibly and imperceptibly, or do the soul take notice of it, we "enter into temptation."

So, then, unto our entering into temptation is required,—

(1.) That by some *advantage*, or on some occasion, Satan be more earnest than ordinary in his solicitations to sin, by affrightments or allurements, by persecutions or seductions, by himself or others; or that some lust or corruption, by his instigation and advantages of outward objects, provoking, as in prosperity, or terrifying, as in trouble, do tumultuate more than ordinary within us. There is a special acting of the author and principles of temptation required thereunto.

(2.) That the heart be so far entangled with it as to be put to *dispute* and argue in its own defence, and yet not be wholly able to eject or cast out the poison and leaven that hath been injected; but is surprised, if it be never so

little off its watch, into an entanglement not easy to be avoided: so that the soul may cry, and pray, and cry again, and yet not be delivered; as Paul “besought the Lord” thrice for the departure of his temptation, and prevailed not. The entanglement continues. And this usually falls out in one of these two seasons:—

[1.] When Satan by the permission of God, for ends best known to himself, hath got some *peculiar* advantage against the soul; as in the case of Peter,—he sought to winnow him, and prevailed.

[2.] When a man’s lusts and corruptions meet with peculiarly provoking *objects* and occasions, through the condition of life that a man is in, with the circumstances of it; as it was with David: of both which afterward.

In this state of things, a man is entered into temptation; and this is called the “hour of temptation,” Rev. iii. 10,—the season wherein it grows to a head: the discovery whereof will give further light into the present inquiry, about what it is to “enter into temptation;” for when the hour of temptation is come upon us, we are entered into it. Every great and pressing temptation hath its hour, a season wherein it grows to a head, wherein it is most vigorous, active, operative, and prevalent. It may be long in rising, it may be long urging, more or less; but it hath a season wherein, from the conjunction of other occurrences, such as those mentioned, outward or inward, it hath a dangerous hour; and then, for the most part, men enter into it. Hence that very tempta-

tion, which at one time hath little or no power on a man,—he can despise it, scorn the motions of it, easily resist it,—at another, bears him away quite before it. It hath, from other circumstances and occurrences, got new strength and efficacy, or the man is enervated and weakened; the hour is come, he is entered into it, and it prevails. David probably had temptations before, in his younger days, to adultery or murder, as he had in the case of Nabal; but the hour of temptation was not come, it had not got its advantages about it, and so he escaped until afterward. Let men look for it that are exposed unto temptations, as who is not? They will have a season wherein their solicitations will be more urgent, their reasonings more plausible, pretences more glorious, hopes of recovery more appearing, opportunities more broad and open, the doors of evil made more beautiful than ever they have been. Blessed is he who is prepared for such a season; without which there is no escaping. This, as I said, is the first thing required to entering into temptation; if we stay here, we are safe.

Before I descend to other particulars, having now entered hereon, I shall show in general,—*1st.* How or by what means commonly any temptation attains its *hour*; *2dly.* How we may know when any temptation is come to its high *noon*, and is in its hour.

1st. It doth the first by several ways:—

(*1st.*) By long *solicitations*, causing the mind frequently to converse with the evil solicited unto, it begets

extenuating thoughts of it. If it makes this process, it is coming towards its hour. It may be when first it began to press upon the soul, the soul was amazed with the ugly appearance of what it aimed at, and cried, "Am I a dog?" If this indagation be not daily heightened, but the soul, by conversing with the evil, begins to grow, as it were, familiar with it, not to be startled as formerly, but rather inclines to cry, "Is it not a little one?" then the temptation is coming towards its high noon; lust hath then enticed and entangled, and is ready to "conceive," James i. 15: of which more at large afterward, in our inquiry how we may know whether we are entered into temptation or no. Our present inquest is after the hour and power of temptation itself.

(2dly.) When it hath prevailed on *others*, and the soul is not filled with *dislike* and abhorrency of them and their ways, nor with pity and prayer for their deliverance. This proves an advantage unto it, and raises it towards its height. When that temptation sets upon any one which, at the same time, hath possessed and prevailed with many, it hath so great and so many advantages thereby, that it is surely growing towards its hour. Its prevailing with others is a means to give it its hour against us. The falling off of Hymeneus and Philetus is said to "overthrow the faith of some," 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.

(3dly.) By *complicating* itself with many considerations that, perhaps, are not absolutely evil. So did the

temptation of the Galatians to fall from the purity of the gospel,—freedom from persecution, union and consent with the Jews. Things in themselves good were pleaded in it, and gave life to the temptation itself. But I shall not now insist on the several advantages that any temptation hath to heighten and greaten itself, to make itself prevalent and effectual, with the contribution that it receives to this purpose from various circumstances, opportunities, specious pleas and pretences, necessities for the doing that which cannot be done without answering the temptation, and the like; because I must speak unto some of them afterward.

2dly. For the second, it may be known,—

(1st.) By its restless *urgency* and arguing. When a temptation is in its hour, it is restless; it is the time of battle, and it gives the soul no rest. Satan sees his advantage, considers his conjunction of forces, and knows that he must now prevail, or be hopeless for ever. Here are opportunities, here are advantages, here are specious pleas and pretences; some ground is already got by former arguings; here are extenuations of the evil, hopes of pardon by after endeavours, all in a readiness: if he can do nothing now, he must sit down lost in his undertakings. So when he had got all things in a readiness against Christ, he made it the “hour of darkness.” When a temptation discovers “mille nocendi artes,” presses within doors by imaginations and reasonings, without by solicitations, advantages, and opportunities,

let the soul know that the hour of it is come, and the glory of God, with its own welfare, depends on its behaviour in this trial; as we shall see in the particular cases following.

(2dly.) When it makes a conjunction of *affrightments* and *allurements*, these two comprise the whole forces of temptation. When both are brought together, temptation is in its hour. They were both in David's case as to the murder of Uriah. There was the fear of his revenge on his wife, and possibly on himself, and fear of the publication of his sin at least; and there was the allurements of his present enjoyment of her whom he lusted after. Men sometimes are carried into sin by love to it, and are continued in it by fear of what will ensue upon it. But in any case, where these two meet, something allures us, something affrights us, and the reasonings that run between them are ready to entangle us,—then is the hour of temptation.

This, then, it is to “enter into temptation,” this is the “hour” of it; of which more in the process of our discourse.

III. There is the means of prevention prescribed by our Saviour; they are two:—1. “Watch;” 2. “Pray.”

1. The first is a general expression, by no means to be limited to its native signification of waking from sleep; to watch is as much as to be on our guard, to take heed, to consider all ways and means whereby an enemy may approach to us: so the apostle, 1 Cor. xvi.

13. This it is to “watch” in this business, to “stand fast in the faith,” as good soldiers, to “quit ourselves like men.” It is as much as *προσέχειν*, to “take heed,” or look to ourselves, as the same thing is by our Saviour often expressed; so Rev. iii. 2. A universal carefulness and diligence, exercising itself in and by all ways and means prescribed by God, over our hearts and ways, the baits and methods of Satan, the occasions and advantages of sin in the world, that we be not entangled, is that which in this word is pressed on us.

2. For the second direction, of prayer, I need not speak to it. The duty and its concernments are known to all. I shall only add, that these two comprise the whole endeavour of faith for the soul’s preservation from temptation.

CHAPTER III.

The doctrine—Grounds of it; our Saviour's direction in this case—His promise of preservation—Issues of men entering into temptation—1. Of ungrounded professors—2. Of the choicest saints, Adam, Abraham, David—Self-consideration as to our own weakness—The power of a man's heart to withstand temptation considered—The considerations it useth for that purpose—The power of temptation; it darkens the mind—The several ways whereby it doth so—1. By fixing the imaginations—2. By entangling the affections—3. Temptations give fuel to lust—The end of temptation considered, with the issue of former temptations—Some objections answered.

HAVING thus opened the words in the foregoing chapters so far as is necessary to discover the foundation of the truth to be insisted on and improved, I shall lay it down in the ensuing observation:—

It is the great duty of all believers to use all diligence in the ways of Christ's appointment, that they fall not into temptation.

I know God is “able to deliver the godly out of temptation;” I know he is “faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will make a way for our escape;” yet I dare say I shall convince all those who will attend unto what is delivered and written, that it is our great duty and concernment to use all diligence,

watchfulness, and care, that we enter not into temptation; and I shall evince it by the ensuing considerations:—

1. In that *compendious* instruction given us by our Saviour concerning what we ought to pray for, this of not entering into temptation is expressly one head. Our Saviour knew of what concernment it was to us not to “enter into temptation,” when he gave us this as one special subject of our daily dealing with God, Matt. vi. 13. And the order of the words shows us of what importance it is: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” If we are led into temptation, evil will befall us, more or less. How God may be said to tempt us, or to “lead us into temptation,” I showed before. In this direction, it is not so much the not *giving us up to it*, as the powerful *keeping us from it* that is intended. The last words are, as it were, exegetical, or expository of the former: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;”—“So deal with us that we may be powerfully delivered from that evil which attends our entering into temptation.” Our blessed Saviour knows full well our state and condition; he knows the power of temptations, having had experience of it, Heb. ii. 18; he not only knows our vain confidence, and the reserves we have concerning our ability to deal with temptations, as he found it in Peter; but he knows our weakness and folly, and how soon we are cast to the ground, and therefore doth he lay in this provision for instruction at the entrance of his

ministry, to make us heedful, if possible, in that which is of so great concernment to us. If, then, we will repose any confidence in the wisdom, love, and care of Jesus Christ towards us, we must grant the truth pleaded for.

2. Christ promiseth this freedom and deliverance as a great *reward* of most acceptable obedience, Rev. iii. 10. This is the great promise made to the church of Philadelphia, wherein Christ found nothing that he would blame, "Thou shalt be kept from the hour of temptation." Not, "Thou shalt be preserved *in* it;" but he goes higher, "Thou shalt be kept *from* it." "There is," saith our Saviour, "an hour of temptation coming; a season that will make havoc in the world: multitudes shall then fall from the faith, deny and blaspheme me. Oh, how few will be able to stand and hold out! Some will be utterly destroyed, and perish for ever. Some will get wounds to their souls that shall never be well healed whilst they live in this world, and have their bones broken, so as to go halting all their days. But," saith he, "'because thou hast kept the word of my patience,' I will be tender towards thee, and 'keep thee from this hour of temptation.'" Certainly that which Christ thus promises to his beloved church, as a reward of her service, love, and obedience, is no light thing. Whatever Christ promiseth to his spouse is a fruit of unspeakable love; that is so in an especial manner which is promised as a reward of special obedience.

3. Let us to this purpose consider the general issues

of men's entering into temptation, and that of bad and good men, of ungrounded professors, and of the choicest saints.

(1.) For the first I shall offer but one or two texts of Scripture. Luke viii. 13, "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy, and have no root, but for a while believe." Well! how long do they believe? They are affected with the preaching of the word, and believe thereon, make profession, bring forth some fruits; but until when do they abide? Says he, "In the time of temptation they fall away." When once they enter into temptation they are gone for ever. Temptation withers all their profession, and slays their souls. We see this accomplished every day. Men who have attended on the preaching of the gospel, been affected and delighted with it, that have made profession of it, and have been looked on, it may be, as believers, and thus have continued for some years; no sooner doth temptation befall them that hath vigour and permanency in it, but they are turned out of the way, and are gone for ever. They fall to hate the word they have delighted in, despise the professors of it, and are hardened by sin. So Matt. vii. 26, "He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, is like unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand." But what doth this house of profession do? It shelters him, keeps him warm, and stands for a while. But saith he, verse 27, "When the rain descends, when temptation comes, it

falls utterly, and its fall is great." Judas follows our Saviour three years, and all goes well with him: he no sooner enters into temptation, Satan hath got him and winnowed him, but he is gone. Demas will preach the gospel until the love of the world befall him, and he is utterly turned aside. It were endless to give instances of this. Entrance into temptation is, with this sort of men, an entrance into apostasy, more or less, in part or in whole; it faileth not.

(2.) For the *saints* of God themselves, let us see, by some instances, what issue they have had of their entering into temptation. I shall name a few:—

Adam was the "son of God," Luke iii. 38, created in the image of God, full of that integrity, righteousness, and holiness, which might be and was an eminent resemblance of the holiness of God. He had a far greater inherent stock of ability than we, and had nothing in him to entice or seduce him; yet this Adam no sooner enters into temptation but he is gone, lost, and ruined, he and all his posterity with him. What can we expect in the like condition, that have not only in our temptations, as he had, a *cunning devil* to deal withal, but a *cursed world* and a *corrupt heart* also?

Abraham was the father of the faithful, whose faith is proposed as a pattern to all them that shall believe; yet he, entering twice into the same temptation, namely, that of fear about his wife, was twice overpowered by it, to the dishonour of God, and no doubt the disquietment of his own soul, Gen. xii. 12, 13, xx. 2.

David is called a "man after God's own heart" by God himself; yet what a dreadful thing is the story of his entering into temptation! He is no sooner entangled, but he is plunged into adultery; thence seeking deliverance by his own invention, like a poor creature in a toil, he is entangled more and more, until he lies as one dead, under the power of sin and folly.

I might mention Noah, Lot, Hezekiah, Peter, and the rest, whose temptations and falls therein are on record for our instruction. Certainly he that hath any heart in these things cannot but say, as the inhabitants of Samaria upon the letter of Jehu, "'Behold, two kings stood not before him, how shall we stand?' O Lord, if such mighty pillars have been cast to the ground, such cedars blown down, how shall I stand before temptations? Oh, keep me that I enter not in!" "*Vestigia terrent.*" Behold the footsteps of them that have gone in. Whom do you see retiring without a wound? a blemish at least? On this account would the apostle have us to exercise tenderness towards them that are fallen into sin: Gal. vi. 1, "Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." He doth not say, "lest thou also sin, or fall, or be overtaken with a fault;" but, "lest thou also be tempted." "Thou seest the power of temptation in others, and knowest not how soon thou mayst be tempted, nor what will be the state and condition of thy soul thereupon." Assuredly, he that hath seen so many better, stronger men than himself fail, and cast down in the trial, will

think it incumbent on him to remember the battle, and, if it be possible, to come there no more. Is it not a madness for a man that can scarce crawl up and down, he is so weak (which is the case of most of us), if he avoid not what he hath seen giants foiled in the undertaking of? Thou art yet whole and sound; take heed of temptation, lest it be with thee as it was with Abraham, David, Lot, Peter, Hezekiah, the Galatians, who fell in the time of trial.

In nothing doth the folly of the hearts of men show itself more openly, in the days wherein we live, than in this cursed boldness, after so many warnings from God, and so many sad experiences every day under their eyes, of running into and putting themselves upon temptations. Any society, any company, any conditions of outward advantages, without once weighing what their strength, or what the concernment of their poor souls is, they are ready for. Though they go over the dead and the slain that in those ways and paths but even now fell down before them, yet they will go on without regard or trembling. At this door are gone out hundreds, thousands of professors, within a few years. But,—

4. Let us *consider ourselves*,—what our weakness is; and what temptation is,—its power and efficacy, with what it leads unto:—

(1.) For ourselves, we are *weakness* itself. We have no strength, no power to withstand. Confidence of any strength in us is one great part of our weakness; it was

so in Peter. He that says he can do anything, can do nothing as he should. And, which is worse, it is the worst kind of weakness that is in us,—a weakness from treachery,—a weakness arising from that party which every temptation hath in us. If a castle or fort be never so strong and well fortified, yet if there be a treacherous party within, that is ready to betray it on every opportunity, there is no preserving it from the enemy. There are traitors in our hearts, ready to take part, to close, and side with every temptation, and to give up all to them; yea, to solicit and bribe temptations to do the work, as traitors incite an enemy. Do not flatter yourselves that you shall hold out; there are secret lusts that lie lurking in your hearts, which perhaps now stir not, which, as soon as any temptation befalls you, will rise, tumultuate, cry, disquiet, seduce, and never give over until they are either killed or satisfied. He that promises himself that the frame of his heart will be the same under a temptation as it is before will be woefully mistaken. “Am I a dog, that I should do this thing?” says Hazael. Yea, thou wilt be such a dog if ever thou be king of Syria; temptation from thy interest will unman thee. He that now abhors the thoughts of such and such a thing, if he once enters into temptation will find his heart inflamed towards it, and all contrary reasonings overborne and silenced. He will deride his former fears, cast out his scruples, and condemn the consideration that he lived upon. Little did Peter think he should deny and

forswear his Master so soon as ever he was questioned whether he knew him or no. It was no better when the hour of temptation came; all resolutions were forgotten, all love to Christ buried; the present temptation closing with his carnal fear carried all before it.

To handle this a little more distinctly, I shall consider the means of safety from the power of temptation, if we enter therein, that may be expected from ourselves; and that in general as to the spring and rise of them, and in particular as to the ways of exerting that strength we have, or seem to have:—

[1.] In general, all we can look for is from our *hearts*. What a man's heart is, that is he; but now what is the heart of a man in such a season?

1st. Suppose a man is not a *believer*, but only a *professor* of the gospel, what can the heart of such a one do? Prov. x. 20, "The heart of the wicked is little worth;" and surely that which is little worth in anything is not much worth in this. A wicked man may in outward things be of great use; but come to his heart, that is false and a thing of nought. Now, withstanding of temptation is heartwork; and when it comes like a flood, can such a rotten trifle as a wicked man's heart stand before it? But of these before. Entering into temptation and apostasy is the same with them.

2dly. Let it be whose heart it will, Prov. xxviii. 26, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool;" he that doth so, be he what he will, in that he is foolish. Peter

did so in his temptation; he trusted in his own heart: "Though all men forsake thee, I will not." It was his folly; but why was it his folly? He shall not be delivered; it will not preserve him in snares; it will not deliver him in temptations. The heart of a man will promise him very fair before a temptation comes. "Am I a dog," says Hazael, "that I should do this thing?" "Though all men should deny thee," [says Peter] "I will not. Shall I do this evil? It cannot be." All the arguments that are suited to give check to the heart in such a condition are mustered up. Did not Peter, think you, do so? "What! deny my Master, the Son of God, my Redeemer, who loves me? Can such ingratitude, unbelief, rebellion, befall me? I will not do it." Shall, then, a man rest in it that his heart will be steadfast? Let the wise man answer: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." "The heart is deceitful," Jer. xvii. 9. We would not willingly trust anything wherein there is any deceit or guile; here is that which is "deceitful above all things." It hath a thousand shifts and treacheries that it will deal withal; when it comes to the trial, every temptation will steal it away, Hos. iv. 11. Generally men's hearts deceive them no oftener than they do trust in them, and then they never fail so to do.

[2.] Consider the particular ways and means that such a heart hath or can use to safeguard itself in the hour of temptation, and their insufficiency to that purpose will quickly appear. I shall instance in some few only:—

1st. Love of *honour* in the world. Reputation and esteem in the church, obtained by former profession and walking, is one of the heart's own weapons to defend itself in the hour of temptation. "Shall such a one as I fly? I who have had such a reputation in the church of God, shall I now lose it by giving way to this lust, to this temptation, by closing with this or that public evil?" This consideration hath such an influence on the spirits of some, that they think it will be a shield and buckler against any assaults that may befall them. They will die a thousand times before they will forfeit that repute they have in the church of God! But, alas! this is but a withe, or a new cord, to bind a giant temptation withal. What think you of the "third part of the stars of heaven?" Rev. xii. 4. Had they not shone in the firmament of the church? Were they not sensible, more than enough, of their own honour, height, usefulness, and reputation? But when the dragon comes with his temptations, he casts them down to the earth. Yes, great temptations will make men, who have not a better defence, insensibly fortify themselves against that dishonour and disreputation that their ways are attended withal. "Populus sibilet, at mihi plaudo." Do we not know instances yet living of some who had ventured on compliances with wicked men after the glory of a long and useful profession, and within a while, finding themselves cast down thereby from their reputation with the saints, have hardened themselves against it and ended in apos-

tasy? as John xv. 6. This kept not Judas; it kept not Hymeneus nor Philetus; it kept not the stars of heaven; nor will it keep thee.

2dly. There is, on the other side, the consideration of *shame*, reproach, loss, and the like. This also men may put their trust in, as a defence against temptations, and do not fear but to be safeguarded and preserved by it. They would not for the world bring that shame and reproach upon themselves that such and such miscarriages are attended withal! Now, besides that this consideration extends itself only to *open sins*, such as the world takes notice of and abhors, and so is of no use at all in such cases as wherein pretences and colours may be invented and used, nor in public temptations to loose and careless walking, like those of our days, nor in cases that may be disputable in themselves, though expressly sinful to the consciences of persons under temptations, nor in heart sins,—in all which and most other cases of temptation there are innumerable reliefs ready to be tendered unto the heart against this consideration; besides all this, I say, we see by experience how easily this cord is broken when once the heart begins to be entangled. Each corner of the land is full of examples to this purpose.

3dly. They have yet that which outweighs these lesser considerations,—namely, that they will not wound their own *consciences*, and disturb their peace, and bring themselves in danger of hell-fire. This, surely, if anything,

will preserve men in the hour of temptation. They will not lavish away their peace, nor venture their souls by running on God and the thick bosses of his buckler! What can be of more efficacy and prevalency? I confess this is of great importance; and oh that it were more pondered than it is! that we laid more weight upon the preservation of our peace with God than we do! yet I say that even this consideration in him who is elsewhere off from his watch, and doth not make it his work to follow the other rules insisted on, it will not preserve him; for,—

(1st.) The peace of such a one may be *false peace* or security, made up of presumption and false hopes; yea, though he be a believer, it may be so. Such was David's peace after his sin, before Nathan came to him; such was Laodicea's peace when ready to perish; and Sardis her peace when dying. What should secure a soul that it is otherwise, seeing, it is supposed, that it doth not universally labour to keep the word of Christ's patience, and to be watchful in all things? Think you that the peace of many in these days will be found to be true peace at last? Nothing less. They go alive down to hell, and death will have dominion over them in the morning. Now, if a man's peace be such, do you think that can preserve him which cannot preserve itself? It will give way at the first vigorous assault of a temptation in its height and hour. Like a broken reed, it will run into the hand of him that leaneth on it. But,—

(2dly.) Suppose the *peace* cared for, and proposed to safeguard the soul, be true and good, yet when all is laid up in this one bottom, when the hour of temptation comes, so many reliefs will be tendered against this consideration as will make it useless. "This evil is *small*; it is *questionable*; it falls not openly and downright upon *conscience*. I do but fear *consequences*; it may be I may keep my peace notwithstanding. Others of the people of God have fallen, and yet kept or recovered their peace. If it be lost for a season, it may be obtained again. I will not solicit its station any more; or though peace be lost, safety may remain." And a thousand such pleas there are, which are all planted as batteries against this fort, so that it cannot long hold out.

(3dly.) The fixing on this particular only is to make good one *passage* or entrance, whilst the enemy assaults us round about. It is true, a little armour would serve to defend a man if he might choose where his enemy should strike him; but we are commanded to take the "whole armour of God," if we intend to resist and stand, Eph. vi. This we speak of is but one piece; and when our eye is only to that, temptation may enter and prevail twenty other ways. For instance, a man may be tempted to worldliness, unjust gain, revenge, vainglory, or the like. If he fortify himself alone with this consideration, he will not do this thing, and wound his conscience and lose his peace; fixing his eye on this particular, and counting himself safe whilst he is not overcome on that

hand, it may be neglect of private communion with God, sensuality, and the like, do creep in, and he is not one jot in a better condition than if he had fallen under the power of that part of the temptation which was most visibly pressing on him. Experience gives to see that this doth and will *fail* also. There is no saint of God but puts a valuation on the peace he hath; yet how many of them fail in the day of temptation!

(*4thly.*) But yet they have another consideration also, and that is, the vileness of sinning against God. How shall they do this thing, and sin against God, the God of their mercies, of their salvation? How shall they wound Jesus Christ, who died for them? This surely cannot but preserve them. I answer,—

First, We see every day this consideration failing also. There is no child of God that is overcome of temptation but overcomes this consideration. It is not, then, a sure and infallible defensive.

Secondly, This consideration is twofold: either it expresses the thoughts of the soul with particular reference to the temptation contended withal, and then it will not preserve it; or it expresses the universal, habitual frame of heart that is in us, upon all accounts; and then it falleth in with what I shall tender as the universal medicine and remedy in this case in the process of this discourse; whereof afterward.

(2.) Consider *the power of temptation*, partly from what was showed before, from the *effects* and fruits of it

in the saints of old, partly from such other effects in general as we find ascribed to it; as,—

[1.] It will *darken the mind*, that a man shall not be able to make a right judgment of things, so as he did before he entered into it. As in the men of the world, the god of this world blinds their minds that they should not see the glory of Christ in the gospel, 2 Cor. iv. 4, and “whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away their hearts,” Hos. iv. 11; so it is in the nature of every temptation, more or less, to take away the heart, or to darken the understanding of the person tempted.

And this it doth divers ways:—

1st. By *fixing* the imagination and the thoughts upon the *object* whereto it tends, so that the mind shall be diverted from the consideration of the things that would relieve and succour it in the state wherein it is. A man is tempted to apprehend that he is forsaken of God, that he is an object of his hatred, that he hath no interest in Christ. By the craft of Satan the mind shall be so *fixed* to the consideration of this state and condition, with the distress of it, that he shall not be able to manage any of the reliefs suggested and tendered to him against it; but, following the fulness of his own thoughts, shall walk on in darkness and have no light. I say, a temptation will so possess and fill the mind with thoughtfulness of itself and the matter of it, that it will take off from that clear consideration of things which otherwise it might and would have. And those things whereof the mind was

wont to have a vigorous sense, to keep it from sin, will by this means come to have no force or efficacy with it; nay, it will commonly bring men to that state and condition, that when others, to whom their estate is known, are speaking to them the things that concern their deliverance and peace, their minds will be so possessed with the matter of their temptation as not at all to understand, scarce to hear one word, that is spoken to them.

2dly. By *woful entangling of the affections*; which, when they are engaged, what influence they have in blinding the mind and darkening the understanding is known. If any know it not, let him but open his eyes in these days, and he will quickly learn it. By what ways and means it is that engaged affections will becloud the mind and darken it I shall not now declare; only, I say, give me a man engaged in hope, love, fear, in reference to any particulars wherein he ought not, and I shall quickly show you wherein he was darkened and blinded. This, then, you will fail in if you enter into temptation:—The present judgment you have of things will not be utterly altered, but darkened and rendered infirm to influence the will and master the affections. These, being set at liberty by temptation, will run on in madness. Forthwith detestation of sin, abhorring of it, terrors of the Lord, sense of love, presence of Christ crucified, all depart, and leave the heart a prey to its enemy.

3dly. Temptation will give *oil and fuel* to our lusts,—incite, provoke, and make them tumultuate and rage

beyond measure. Tendering a lust, a corruption, a suitable object, advantage, occasion, it heightens and exasperates it, makes it for a season wholly predominant: so dealt it with carnal fear in Peter, with pride in Hezekiah, with covetousness in Achan, with uncleanness in David, with worldliness in Demas, with ambition in Diotrephes. It will lay the reins on the neck of a lust, and put spurs to the sides of it, that it may rush forward like a horse into the battle. A man knows not the pride, fury, madness of a corruption, until it meet with a suitable temptation. And what now will a poor soul think to do? His mind is darkened, his affections entangled, his lusts inflamed and provoked, his relief is defeated; and what will be the issue of such a condition?

(3.) Consider that temptations are either *public* or *private*; and let us a little view the efficacy and power of them apart:—

[1.] There are public temptations; such as that mentioned, Rev. iii. 10, that was to come upon the world, “to try them that dwell upon the earth;” or a combination of persecution and seduction for the trial of a careless generation of professors. Now, concerning such a temptation, consider that,—

1st. It hath an *efficacy* in respect of God, who sends it to revenge the neglect and contempt of the gospel on the one hand, and treachery of false professors on the other. Hence it will certainly accomplish what it receives commission from him to do. When Satan offered his service

to go forth and seduce Ahab that he might fall, God says to him, "Thou shalt persude him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so," 1 Kings xxii. 22. He is permitted as to his wickedness, and commissioned as to the event and punishment intended. When the Christian world was to be given up to folly and false worship for their neglect of the truth, and their naked, barren, fruitless, Christ-dishonouring profession, it is said of the temptation that fell upon them, that "God sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie," 2 Thess. ii. 11. That that comes so from God, in a *judiciary* manner, hath a power with it and shall prevail. That selfish, spiritually-slothful, careless, and worldly frame of spirit, which in these days hath infected almost the body of professors, if it have a commission from God to kill hypocrites, to wound negligent saints, to break their bones, and make them scandalous, that they may be ashamed, shall it not have a power and efficacy so to do? What work hath the spirit of error made amongst us! Is it not from hence, that as some men delighted not to retain God in their hearts, so he hath "given them up to a reprobate mind?" Rom. i. 28. A man would think it strange, yea, it is a matter of amazement, to see persons of a sober spirit, pretending to great things in the ways of God, overcome, captivated, ensnared, destroyed by weak means, sottish opinions, foolish imaginations, such as a man would think it impossible that they should ever lay hold on sensible or rational men, much less on pro-

fessors of the gospel. But that which God will have to be strong, let us not think weak. No strength but the strength of God can stand in the way of the weakest things of the world that are commissioned from God for any end or purpose whatever.

2dly. There is in such temptations the secret insinuation of *examples* in those that are accounted *godly* and are professors: Matt. xxiv. 12, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold," etc. The abounding of iniquity in some will insensibly cast water on the zeal and love of others, that by little and little it shall wax cold. Some begin to grow negligent, careless, worldly, wanton. They break the ice towards the pleasing of the flesh. At first others blame, judge them, perhaps reprove them. In a short space their love also waxes cold; and the brunt being over, they also conform to them, and are cast into the same mould with them. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Paul repeats this saying twice, 1 Cor. v. 6, and Gal. v. 9. He would have us take notice of it; and it is of the danger of the infection of the whole body, from the ill examples of some, whereof he speaks. We know how insensibly leaven proceedeth to give a savour to the whole; so it is termed a "root of bitterness" that "springeth up and defileth many," Heb. xii. 15. If one little piece of leaven, if one bitter root, may endanger the whole, how much more when there are many roots of that nature, and much leaven is scattered abroad! It is easy follow-

ing a multitude to do evil, and saying "A conspiracy" to them to whom the people say "A conspiracy." Would any one have thought it possible that such and such professors, in our days, should have fallen into ways of self, of flesh, of the world? to play at cards, dice, revel, dance? to neglect family, closet duties? to be proud, haughty, ambitious, worldly, covetous, oppressive? or that they should be turned away after foolish, vain, ridiculous opinions, deserting the gospel of Christ? In which two lies the great temptation that is come on us, the inhabitants of this world, to try us. But doth not every man see that this is come to pass? And may we not see how it is come to pass? Some loose, empty professors, who had never more than a form of godliness, when they had served their turn of that, began the way to them; then others began a little to comply, and to please the flesh in so doing. This, by little and little, hath reached even the top boughs and branches of our profession, until almost all flesh hath corrupted its way. And he that departeth from these iniquities makes his name a prey, if not his person.

3dly. Public temptations are usually accompanied with *strong reasons and pretences*, that are too hard for men, or at least insensibly prevail upon them to an undervaluation of the evil whereunto the temptation leads, to give strength to that complicated temptation which in these days hath even cast down the people of God from their excellency,—hath cut their locks, and made them become

like other men. How full is the world of specious pretences and pleadings! As there is the liberty and freedom of Christians, delivered from a bondage frame, this is a door that, in my own observation, I have seen sundry going out at, into sensuality and apostasy; beginning at a light conversation, proceeding to a neglect of the Sabbath, public and private duties, ending in dissoluteness and profaneness. And then there is leaving of public things to Providence, being contented with what is;—things good in themselves, but disputed into wretched, carnal compliances, and the utter ruin of all zeal for God, the interest of Christ or his people in the world. These and the like considerations, joined with the ease and plenty, the greatness and promotion of professors, have so brought things about, that whereas we have by Providence shifted places with the men of the world, we have by sin shifted spirits with them also. We are like a plantation of men carried into a foreign country. In a short space they degenerate from the manners of the people from whence they came, and fall into that of the country whereunto they are brought; as if there were something in the soil and the air that transformed them. Give me leave a little to follow my similitude: He that should see the prevailing party of these nations, many of those in rule, power, favour, with all their adherents, and remember that they were a colony of Puritans,—whose habitation was “in a low place,” as the prophet speaks of the city of God,—translated by a high hand to the

mountains they now possess, cannot but wonder how soon they have forgot the customs, manners, ways, of their own old people, and are cast into the mould of them that went before them in the places whereunto they are translated. I speak of us all, especially of us who are amongst the lowest of the people, where perhaps this iniquity doth most abound. What were those before us that we are not? what did they that we do not? Prosperity hath slain the foolish and wounded the wise.

[2.] Suppose the temptation is private. This hath been spoken to before; I shall add two things:—

1st. Its *union and incorporation* with lust, whereby it gets within the soul, and lies at the bottom of its actings. John tells us, 1 John, ii. 16, that the things that are “in the world” are, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.” Now, it is evident that all these things are principally in the *subject*, not in the *object*,—in the *heart*, not in the *world*. But they are said to be “in the world,” because the world gets into them, mixes itself with them, unites, incorporates. As faith and the promises are said to be “mixed,” Heb. iv. 2, so are lust and temptation mixed: they twine together; receive mutual improvement from one another; grow each of them higher and higher by the mutual strength they administer to one another. Now, by this means temptation gets so deep in the heart that no contrary reasonings can reach unto it; nothing but what can kill the lust can conquer the temptation. Like leprosy that hath

mingled itself with the wall, the wall itself must be pulled down, or the leprosy will not be cured. Like a gangrene that mixes poison with the blood and spirits, and cannot be separated from the place where it is, but both must be cut off together. For instance, in David's temptation to uncleanness, ten thousand considerations might have been taken in to stop the mouth of the temptation; but it had united itself with his lust, and nothing but the killing of that could destroy it, or get him the conquest. This deceives many a one. They have some pressing temptation, that, having got some advantages, is urgent upon them. They pray against it, oppose it with all powerful considerations, such as whereof every one seems sufficient to conquer and destroy it, at least to overpower it, that it should never be troublesome any more; but no good is done, no ground is got or obtained, yea, it grows upon them more and more. What is the reason of it? It hath incorporated and united itself with the lust, and is safe from all the opposition they make. If they would make work indeed, they are to set upon the whole of the lust itself; their ambition, pride, worldliness, sensuality, or whatever it be, that the temptation is united with. All other dealings with it are like tamperings with a prevailing gangrene: the part or whole may be preserved a little while, in great torment; excision or death must come at last. The soul may cruciate itself for a season with such a procedure; but it must come to this,—its lust must die, or the soul must die.

2dly. In what part soever of the soul the lust be seated wherewith the temptation is united, it draws after it *the whole soul* by one means or other, and so prevents or anticipates any opposition. Suppose it be a lust of the mind,—as there are lusts of the mind and uncleanness of the spirit, such as ambition, vain-glory, and the like,—what a world of ways hath the understanding to bridle the affections that they should not so tenaciously cleave to God, seeing in what it aimeth at there is so much to give them contentment and satisfaction! It will not only prevent all the reasonings of the mind, which it doth necessarily,—being like a bloody infirmity in the eyes, presenting all things to the common sense and perception in that hue and colour,—but it will draw the whole soul, on other accounts and collateral considerations, into the same frame. It promises the whole a share in the spoil aimed at; as Judas's money, that he first desired from covetousness, was to be shared among all his lusts. Or be it in the more sensual part, and first possesseth the affections,—what prejudices they will bring upon the understanding, how they will bribe it to an acquiescence, what arguments, what hopes they will supply it withal, cannot easily be expressed, as was before showed. In brief, there is no particular temptation, but, when it is in its hour, it hath such a contribution of assistance from things good, evil, indifferent, is fed by so many considerations that seem to be most alien and foreign to it, in

some cases hath such specious pleas and pretences, that its strength will easily be acknowledged.

(4.) Consider the end of any temptation; this is Satan's end and sin's end,—that is, the dishonour of God and the ruin of our souls.

(5.) Consider what hath been the *issue* of any former temptations that thou hast had. Have they not defiled thy conscience, disquieted thy peace, weakened thee in thy obedience, clouded the face of God? Though thou wast not prevailed on to the outward evil or utmost issue of thy temptation, yet hast thou not been foiled? hath not thy soul been sullied and grievously perplexed with it? yea, didst thou ever in thy life come fairly off, without sensible loss, from any temptation almost that thou hadst to deal withal; and wouldst thou willingly be entangled again? If thou art at liberty, take heed; enter no more, if it be possible, lest a worse thing happen to thee.

These, I say, are some of those many considerations that might be insisted on, to manifest the importance of the truth proposed, and the fulness of our concernment in taking care that we “enter not into temptation.”

Against what hath been spoken, some objections that secretly insinuate themselves into the souls of men, and have an efficacy to make them negligent and careless in this thing, which is of such importance to them,—a duty of such indispensable necessity to them who intend to

walk with God in any peace, or with any faithfulness,—are to be considered and removed. And they are these that follow:—

Obj. 1. “Why should we so fear and labour to avoid temptation? James i. 2, we are commanded to ‘count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations.’ Now, certainly I need not solicitously avoid the falling into that which, when I am fallen into, I am to count it all joy.” To which I answer,—

1. You will not hold by this rule in all things,—namely, that a man need not seek to avoid that which, when he cannot but fall into, it is his duty to rejoice therein. The same apostle bids the rich “rejoice that they are made low,” chap. i. 10. And, without doubt, to him who is acquainted with the goodness, and wisdom, and love of God in his dispensations, in every condition that is needful for him, it will be a matter of rejoicing to him: but yet, how few rich, godly men can you persuade not to take heed, and use all lawful means that they be not made poor and low! and, in most cases, the truth is, it were their sin not to do so. It is our business to make good our stations, and to secure ourselves as we can; if God alter our condition we are to rejoice in it. If the temptations here mentioned befall us, we may have cause to rejoice; but not if, by a neglect of duty, we fall into them.

2. Temptations are taken *two ways*:—

(1.) Passively and merely *materially*, for such things as are, or in some cases may be, temptations; or,—

(2.) *Actively*, for such as do entice to sin. James speaks of temptations in the first sense only; for having said, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,” verse 2; he adds, verse 12, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.” But now whereas a man might say, “If this be so, then temptations are good, and from God:”—“No,” says James; “take temptation in such a sense as that it is a thing enticing and leading to sin, so God tempts none; but every man is tempted of his own lust,” verses 13, 14. “To have such temptations, to be tempted to sin, that is not the blessed thing I intend; but the enduring of afflictions that God sends for the trial of our faith, that is a blessed thing. So that, though I must count it all joy when, through the will of God, I fall into divers afflictions for my trial, which yet have the matter of temptation in them, yet I am to use all care and diligence that my lust have no occasions or advantages given unto it to tempt me to sin.”

Obj. 2. “But was not our Saviour Christ himself tempted; and is it evil to be brought into the same state and condition with him? Yea, it is not only said that he was tempted, but his being so is expressed as a thing advantageous, and conducing to his mercifulness as our

priest: Heb. ii. 17, 18, 'In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.' And he makes it a ground of a great promise to his disciples, that they had 'abode with him in his temptations,' Luke xxii. 28."

Ans. It is true, our Saviour was tempted; but yet his temptations are reckoned among the *evils* that befell him in the days of his flesh,—things that came on him through the malice of the world and the prince thereof. He did not wilfully cast himself into temptation, which he said was "to tempt the Lord our God," Matt. iv. 7; as, indeed, willingly to enter into any temptation is highly to tempt God. Now, our condition is so, that, use the greatest diligence and watchfulness that we can, yet we shall be sure to be tempted, and be made like to Christ therein. This hinders not but that it is our duty to the utmost to prevent our falling into them; and that namely on this account:—Christ had only the *suffering* part of temptation when he entered into it; we have also the *sinning* part of it. When the prince of this world came to Christ, he had "no part in him;" but when he comes to us, he hath some in us. So that though in one effect of temptations, namely, trials and disquietness, we are made like to Christ, and so are to rejoice as far as by any means that is produced; yet by another we are made unlike to him,—which is our being defiled and entangled: and are therefore to seek by all means to avoid them.

We never come off like Christ. Who of us “enter into temptation” and are not defiled?

Obj. 3. “But what need this great endeavour and carefulness? Is it not said that ‘God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape?’ 1 Cor. x. 13; and, ‘He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations,’ 2 Pet. ii. 9. What need we, then, be solicitous that we enter not into them?”

Ans. I much question what assistance he will have from God in his temptation who willingly enters into it, because he supposes God hath promised to deliver him out of it. The Lord knows that, through the craft of Satan, the subtlety and malice of the world, the deceitfulness of sin, that doth so easily beset us, when we have done our utmost, yet we shall enter into divers temptations. In his love, care, tenderness, and faithfulness, he hath provided such a sufficiency of grace for us, that they shall not utterly prevail to make an everlasting separation between him and our souls. Yet I have three things to say to this objection:—

(1.) He that *wilfully* or negligently enters into temptation hath no reason in the world to promise himself any assistance from God, or any deliverance from the temptation whereunto he is entered. The promise is made to them whom temptations do befall in their way, whether they will or not; not them that wilfully fall into them,—

that run out of their way to meet with them. And therefore the devil (as is usually observed), when he tempted our Saviour, left out that expression of the text of Scripture, which he wrested to his purpose, "All thy ways." The promise of deliverance is to them who are in their ways; whereof this is one principal, to beware of temptation.

(2.) Though there be a sufficiency of grace provided for all the *elect*, that they shall by no temptation fall utterly from God, yet it would make any gracious heart to tremble, to think what dishonour to God, what scandal to the gospel, what woful darkness and disquietness they may bring upon their own souls, though they perish not. And they who are scared by nothing but fear of hell, on whom other considerations short thereof have no influence, in my apprehension have more reason to fear it than perhaps they are aware of.

(3.) To enter on temptation on this account is to venture on sin (which is the same with "continuing in sin") "that grace may abound," Rom. vi. 1, 2; which the apostle rejects the thoughts of, with greatest detestation. Is it not a madness, for a man willingly to suffer the ship wherein he is, to split itself on a rock, to the irrecoverable loss of his merchandise, because he supposes he shall in his own person swim safely to shore on a plank? Is it less in him who will hazard the shipwreck of all his comfort, peace, joy, and so

much of the glory of God and honour of the gospel as he is entrusted with, merely on supposition that his soul shall yet escape? These things a man would think did not deserve to be mentioned, and yet with such as these do poor souls sometimes delude themselves.

CHAPTER IV.

Particular cases proposed to consideration—The first, its resolution in sundry particulars—Several discoveries of the state of a soul entering into temptation.

THESE things being premised in general, I proceed to the consideration of *three particular cases arising* from the truth proposed: the first whereof relates unto the *thing* itself; the second unto the *time* or season thereof; and the last unto our *deportment* in reference unto the prevention of the evil treated of.

First, then, it may be inquired,—1. *How a man may know when he is entered into temptation.* 2. *What directions are to be given for the preventing of our entering into temptation.* 3. *What seasons there are wherein a man may and ought to fear that an hour of temptation is at hand.*

1. How shall a man know whether he be entered into temptation or no, is our first inquiry. I say, then,—

(1.) When a *man is drawn into any sin*, he may be sure that he hath entered into temptation. All *sin* is from temptation, James i. 14. Sin is a fruit that comes only from that root. Though a man be never so suddenly or violently surprised in or with any sin, yet it is from some temptation or other that he hath been so sur-

prised: so the apostle, Gal. vi. 1. If a man be surprised, overtaken with a fault, yet he was tempted to it; for says he, "Consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted,"—that is, as he was when he was so surprised, as it were, at unawares. This men sometimes take no notice of, to their great disadvantage. When they are overtaken with a sin they set themselves to repent of that sin, but do not consider the temptation that was the cause of it, to set themselves against that also, to take care that they enter no more into it. Hence are they quickly again entangled by it, though they have the greatest detestation of the sin itself that can be expressed. He that would indeed get the conquest over any sin must consider his temptations to it, and strike at that root; without deliverance from thence, he will not be healed.

This is a folly that possesses many who have yet a quick and living sense of sin. They are sensible of their *sins*, not of their *temptations*,—are displeased with the bitter fruit, but cherish the poisonous root. Hence, in the midst of their humiliation for sin, they will continue in those ways, those societies, in the pursuit of those ends, which have occasioned that sin; of which more afterward.

(2.) Temptations have *several degrees*. Some arise to such an height, do so press on the soul, so cruciate and disquiet it, so fight against all opposition that is made to it, that it must needs be past all doubt, to him who is so assaulted, that it is a peculiar power of temptation that

he is to wrestle withal. When a fever rages, a man knows he is sick, unless his distemper have made him mad. The lusts of men, as James tells us, "entice, draw away," and seduce them to sin; but this they do of themselves, without peculiar instigation, in a more quiet, even, and sedate manner. If they grow violent, if they hurry the soul up and down, give it no rest, the soul may know that they have got the help of temptation to their assistance.

Take an empty vessel and put it into some stream that is in its course to the sea, it will infallibly be carried thither, according to the course and speed of the stream; but let strong winds arise upon it, it will be driven with violence on every bank and rock, until, being broken in pieces, it is swallowed up of the ocean. Men's lusts will infallibly (if not mortified in the death of Christ) carry them into eternal ruin, but oftentimes without much noise, according to the course of the stream of their corruptions; but let the wind of strong temptations befall them, they are hurried into innumerable scandalous sins, and so, broken upon all accounts, are swallowed up in eternity. So is it in general with men; so in particular. Hezekiah had the root of *pride* in him always; yet it did not make him run up and down to show his treasure and his riches until he fell into temptation by the ambassadors of the king of Babylon. So had David; yet could he keep off from numbering the people until Satan stood up and provoked him, and solicited him to do it.

Judas was covetous from the beginning; yet he did not contrive to satisfy it, by selling of his Master until the devil entered into him, and he thereby into temptation. The like may be said of Abraham, Jonah, Peter, and the rest. So that when any lust or corruption whatever tumultuates and disquieteth the soul, puts it with violence on sin, let the soul know that it hath got the advantage of some outward temptation, though as yet it perceiveth not wherein, or at least is become itself a peculiar temptation by some incitation or provocation that hath befallen it, and is to be looked to more than ordinarily.

(3.) Entering into temptation may be seen in the lesser degrees of it; as, for instance, when the heart begins secretly to like *the matter of the temptation*, and is content to feed it and increase it by any ways that it may without downright sin.

In particular, a man begins to be in repute for piety, wisdom, learning, or the like;—he is spoken of much to that purpose; his heart is tickled to hear of it, and his pride and ambition affected with it. If this man now, with all his strength, ply the things from whence his repute, and esteem, and glory amongst men do spring, with a secret eye to have it increased, he is entering into temptation; which, if he take not heed, will quickly render him a slave of lust. So was it with Jehu. He perceived that his repute for zeal began to grow abroad,

and he got honour by it. Jonadab comes in his way, a good and holy man. "Now," thinks Jehu, "I have an opportunity to grow in the honour of my zeal." So he calls Jonadab to him, and to work he goes most seriously. The things he did were good in themselves, but he was entered into temptation, and served his lust in all that he did. So is it with many scholars. They find themselves esteemed and favoured for their learning. This takes hold of the pride and ambition of their hearts. Hence they set themselves to study with all diligence day and night,—a thing good in itself; but they do it that they may satisfy the thoughts and words of men, wherein they delight: and so in all they do they make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.

It is true, God oftentimes brings light out of this darkness, and turns things to a better issue. After, it may be, a man hath studied sundry years, with an eye upon his lusts,—his ambition, pride, and vain-glory,—rising early and going to bed late, to give them satisfaction, God comes in with his grace, turns the soul to himself, robs those Egyptian lusts, and so consecrates that to the use of the tabernacle which was provided for idols.

Men may be thus entangled in better things than learning, even in the *profession* of piety, in their labour in the ministry, and the like. Some men's profession is a snare to them. They are in reputation, and are much honoured on the account of their profession and strict walk-

ing. This often falls out in the days wherein we live, wherein all things are carried by parties. Some find themselves on the accounts mentioned, perhaps, to be the darlings and “*ingentia decora*,” or glory of their party. If thoughts hereof secretly insinuate themselves into their hearts, and influence them into more than ordinary diligence and activity in their way and profession, they are entangled; and instead of aiming at more glory, had need lie in the dust, in a sense of their own vileness. And so close is this temptation, that oftentimes it requires no food to feed upon, but that he who is entangled with it do avoid all means and ways of honour and reputation; so that it can but whisper in the heart that that avoidance is honourable. The same may be the condition with men, as was said, in *preaching the gospel*, in the work of the ministry. Many things in that work may yield them esteem,—their ability, their plainness, their frequency, their success; and all in this sense may be fuel unto temptations. Let, then, a man know that when he likes that which feeds his lust, and keeps it up by ways either good in themselves or not downright sinful, he is entered into temptation.

(4.) When by a man’s state or condition of life, or any means whatever, it comes to pass that his lust and any temptation meet with occasions and opportunities for its provocation and stirring up, let that man know, whether he perceive it or not, that he is certainly entered into

temptation. I told you before, that to enter into temptation is not merely to be tempted, but so to be under the *power* of it as to be entangled by it. Now, it is impossible almost for a man to have opportunities, occasions, advantages, suited to his lust and corruption, but he will be entangled. If ambassadors come from the king of Babylon, Hezekiah's pride will cast him into temptation. If Hazael be king of Syria, his cruelty and ambition will make him to rage savagely against Israel. If the priests come with their pieces of silver, Judas's covetousness will instantly be at work to sell his Master. And many instances of the like kind may, in the days wherein we live, be given. Some men think to play on the hole of the asp and not be stung, to touch pitch and not be defiled, to take fire in their clothes and not be burnt; but they will be mistaken. If thy business, course of life, societies, or whatever else it be of the like kind, do cast thee on such things, ways, persons, as suit thy lust or corruption, know that thou art entered into temptation; how thou wilt come out God only knows. Let us suppose a man that hath any seeds of filthiness in his heart engaged, in the course of his life, in society, light, vain, and foolish, what notice soever, little, great, or none at all, it be that he takes of it, he is undoubtedly entered into temptation. So is it with ambition in high places; passion in a multitude of perplexing affairs; polluted corrupt fancy in vain societies, and the perusal

of idle books or treatises of vanity and folly. Fire and things combustible may more easily be induced to lie together without affecting each other, than *peculiar* lusts and *suitable* objects or occasions for their exercise.

(5.) When a man is *weakened*, made *negligent* or *formal* in duty, when he can omit duties or content himself with a careless, lifeless performance of them, without delight, joy, or satisfaction to his soul, who had another frame formerly; let him know, that though he may not be acquainted with the particular distemper wherein it consists, yet in something or other he is entered into temptation, which at the length he will find evident, to his trouble and peril. How many have we seen and known in our days, who, from a warm profession, have fallen to be negligent, careless, indifferent in praying, reading, hearing, and the like! Give an instance of one who hath come off without a wound, and I dare say you may find out a hundred for him that have manifested themselves to have been asleep on the top of the mast; that they were in the jaws of some vile temptation or other, that afterward brought forth bitter fruit in their lives and ways. From some few returners from folly we have every day these doleful complaints made: "Oh! I neglected private prayer; I did not meditate on the word, nor attend to hearing, but rather despised these things: and yet said I was rich and wanted nothing. Little did I consider that this unclean lust was ripening in my

heart; this atheism, these abominations were fomenting there." This is a certain rule:—If his heart grow cold, negligent, or formal in duties of the worship of God, and that either as to the matter or manner of them, who hath had another frame, one temptation or other hath laid hold upon him. World, or pride, or uncleanness, or self-seeking, or malice and envy, or one thing or other, hath possessed his spirit; *gray hairs are here and there upon him*, though he perceive it not. And this is to be observed as to the manner of duties, as well as to the matter. Men may, upon many sinister accounts, especially for the satisfaction of their consciences, keep up and frequent duties of religion, as to the substance and matter of them, when they have no heart to them, no life in them, as to the spirituality required in their performance. Sardis kept up the performance of duties, and had therefore a name to live; but wanted spiritual life in their performance, and was therefore "dead," Rev. iii. 1. As it is in distempers of the body, if a man find his spirits faint, his heart oppressed, his head heavy, the whole person indisposed, though he do not yet actually burn nor rave, yet he will cry, "I fear I am entering into a fever, I am so out of order and indisposed;"—a man may do so in this sickness of the soul. If he find his pulse not beat aright and evenly towards duties of worship and communion with God,—if his spirit be low, and his heart faint in them,—let him conclude, though

his lust do not yet burn or rage, that he is entered into temptation, and it is high time for him to consider the particular causes of his distemper. If the head be heavy and slumber in the things of grace, if the heart be cold in duties, evil lies at the door. And if such a soul do escape a great temptation unto sin, yet it shall not escape a great temptation by desertion. The spouse cries, "I sleep," Cant. v. 2; and that she had "put off her coat, and could not put it on;"—had an indisposition to duties and communion with Christ. What is the next news you have of her? Verse 6, Her "Beloved had withdrawn himself,"—Christ was gone; and she seeks him long and finds him not. There is such a suitableness between the new nature that is wrought and created in believers, and the duties of the worship of God, that they will not be parted nor kept asunder, unless it be by the interposition of some disturbing distemper. The new creature feeds upon them, is strengthened and increased by them, finds sweetness in them, yea, meets in them with its God and Father; so that it cannot but of itself, unless made sick by some temptation, delight in them, and desire to be in the exercise of them. This frame is described in the 119th Psalm throughout. It is not, I say, cast out of this frame and temper unless it be oppressed and disordered by one secret temptation or other. Sundry other evidences there are of a soul's entering into temptation, which upon inquiry it may discover.

I propose this to take off the *security* that we are apt to fall into, and to manifest what is the peculiar duty that we are to apply ourselves unto in the special seasons of temptation; for he that is already entered into temptation is to apply himself unto means for disentanglement, not to labour to prevent his entering in. How this may be done I shall afterward declare.

CHAPTER V.

The second case proposed, or inquiries resolved—What are the best directions to prevent entering into temptation—Those directions laid down—The directions given by our Saviour: “Watch and pray”—What is included therein—(1.) Sense of the danger of temptation—(2.) That it is not in our power to keep ourselves—(3.) Faith in promises of preservation—Of prayer in particular.

HAVING seen the danger of entering into temptation, and also discovered the ways and seasons whereby and wherein men usually do so, our second inquiry is, What general directions may be given to preserve a soul from that condition that hath been spoken of? And we see our Saviour’s direction in the place spoken of before, Matt. xxvi. 41. He sums up all in these two words, “Watch and pray.” I shall a little labour to unfold them, and show what is inwrapped and contained in them; and that, both jointly and severally:—

(1.) There is included in them a clear *abiding apprehension of the great evil* that there is in entering into temptation. That which a man watches and prays against, he looks upon as evil to him, and by all means to be avoided.

This, then, is the *first* direction:—*Always bear in mind the great danger that it is for any soul to enter into temptation.*

It is a woful thing to consider what slight thoughts the most have of this thing. So men can keep themselves from sin itself in open action, they are content, they scarce aim at more ; on any temptation in the world, all sorts of men will venture at any time. How will young men put themselves on any company, any society ; at first, being delighted with *evil company*, then with the *evil of the company* ! How vain are all admonitions and exhortations to them to take heed of such persons, debauched in themselves, corrupters of others, destroyers of souls ! At first they will venture on the company, abhorring the thoughts of practising their lewdness ; but what is the issue ? Unless it be here or there one, whom God snatches with a mighty hand from the jaws of destruction, they are all lost, and become after a while in love with the evil which at first they abhorred. This open door to the ruin of souls is too evident ; and woful experience makes it no less evident that it is almost impossible to fasten upon many poor creatures any fear or dread of temptation, who yet will profess a fear and abhorrence of sin. Would it were only thus with young men, such as are unaccustomed to the yoke of the Lord ! What sort of men is free from this folly in one thing or other ? How many professors have I known that would plead for their *liberty*, as they called it ! They could hear any thing, all things,—all sorts of men, all men ; they would try all things whether they came to them in the way of God or no ; and on that account would run

to hear and to attend to every broacher of false and abominable opinions, every seducer, though stigmatized by the generality of the saints: for such a one they had their liberty,—they could do it; but the opinions they hated as much as any. What hath been the issue? I scarce ever knew any come off without a wound; the most have had their faith overthrown. Let no man, then, pretend to fear sin that doth not fear temptation to it. They are too nearly allied to be separated. Satan hath put them so together that it is very hard for any man to put them asunder. He hates not the fruit who delights in the root.

When men see that such ways, such companies, such courses, such businesses, such studies and aims, do entangle them, make them cold, careless, are quench-coals to them, indispose them to even, universal, and constant obedience, if they adventure on them, sin lies at the door. It is a tender frame of spirit, sensible of its own weakness and corruption, of the craft of Satan, of the evil of sin, of the efficacy of temptation, that can perform his duty. And yet until we bring our hearts to this frame, upon the considerations before-mentioned, or the like that may be proposed, we shall never free ourselves from sinful entanglements. Boldness upon temptation, springing from several pretences, hath, as is known, ruined innumerable professors in these days, and still continues to cast many down from their excellency; nor have I the least hope of a more fruitful profession

amongst us until I see more fear of temptation. Sin will not long seem great or heavy unto any to whom temptations seem light or small.

This is the first thing inwrapped in this general direction:—The daily exercise of our thoughts, with an apprehension of the great danger that lies in entering into temptation, is required of us. Grief of the Spirit of God, disquietment of our own souls, loss of peace, hazard of eternal welfare, lies at the door. If the soul be not prevailed withal to the observation of this direction, all that ensues will be of no value. Temptation despised will conquer; and if the heart be made tender and watchful here, half the work of securing a good conversation is over. And let not him go any further who resolves not to improve this direction, in a daily conscientious observation of it.

(2.) There is this in it also, that it is *not a thing in our own power*, to keep and preserve ourselves from entering into temptation. Therefore are we to pray that we may be preserved from it, because we cannot save ourselves.

This is another means of preservation. As we have no strength to resist a temptation when it doth come, when we are entered into it, but shall fall under it, without a supply of sufficiency of grace from God; so to reckon that we have no power or wisdom to keep ourselves from entering into temptation, but must be kept by the power and wisdom of God, is a preserving principle, 1 Pet. i. 5. We are in all things “kept by the

power of God." This our Saviour instructs us in, not only by directing us to pray that we be not led into temptation, but also by his own praying for us, that we may be kept from it: John xvii. 15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil,"—that is, the temptations of the world unto evil, unto sin,—ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ, "out of the evil" that is in the world, that is temptation, which is all that is evil in the world; or from the evil one, who in the world makes use of the world unto temptation. Christ prays his Father to keep us, and instructs us to pray that we be so kept. It is not then a thing in our own power. The ways of our entering into temptation are so many, various, and imperceptible,—the means of it so efficacious and powerful,—the entrances of it so deceitful, subtle, insensible, and plausible,—our weakness, our unwatchfulness, so unspeakable,—that we cannot in the least keep or preserve ourselves from it. We fail both in wisdom and power for this work.

Let the heart, then, commune with itself and say, "*I* am poor and weak; *Satan* is subtle, cunning, powerful, watching constantly for advantages against my soul; the *world* earnest, pressing, and full of specious pleas, innumerable pretences, and ways of deceit; my *own corruption* violent and tumultuating, enticing, entangling, conceiving sin, and warring in me, against me; *occasions* and advantages of temptation innumerable in all things I have done or suffer, in all businesses and persons with

whom I converse; the *first beginnings* of temptation insensible and plausible, so that, left unto myself, I shall not know that I am ensnared, until my bonds be made strong, and sin hath got ground in my heart: therefore on God alone will I rely for preservation, and continually will I look up to him on that account." This will make the soul to be always committing itself to the care of God, resting itself on him, and to do nothing, undertake nothing, etc., without asking counsel of him. So that a double advantage will arise from the observation of this direction, both of singular use for the soul's preservation from the evil feared:—

[1.] The engagement of the grace and compassion of God, who hath called the *fatherless* and *helpless* to rest upon him; nor did ever soul fail of supplies, who, in a sense of want, rolled itself on him, on the account of his gracious invitation.

[2.] The *keeping* of it in such a frame as, on various accounts, is useful for its preservation. He that looks to God for assistance in a due manner is both sensible of his danger, and conscientiously careful in the use of means to preserve himself: which two, of what importance they are in this case, may easily be apprehended by them who have their hearts exercised in these things.

[3.] This also is in it,—act *faith* on the *promise* of God for preservation. To believe that he will preserve us is a means of preservation; for this God will certainly do, or make a way for us to escape out of tempta-

tion, if we fall into it under such a believing frame. We are to pray for what God hath promised. Our requests are to be regulated by his promises and commands, which are of the same extent. Faith closes with the promises, and so finds relief in this case. This James instructs us in, chap. i. 5-7. What we want we must "ask of God;" but we must "ask in faith," for otherwise we must not "think that we shall receive anything of the Lord." This then, also, is in this direction of our Saviour, that we act faith on the promises of God for our preservation out of temptation. He hath promised that he will keep us in all our ways; that we shall be directed in a way that, though we are fools, "we shall not err therein," Isa. xxxv. 8; that he will lead us, guide us, and deliver us from the evil one. Set faith to work on these promises of God, and expect a good and comfortable issue. It is not easily conceived what a train of graces faith is attended withal, when it goes forth to meet Christ in the promises, nor what a power for the preservation of the soul lies in this thing; but I have spoken to this elsewhere.*

4. Weigh these things *severally*, and, first, take prayer into consideration. To pray that we enter not into temptation is a means to preserve us from it. Glorious things are, by all men that know aught of those things, spoken of this *duty*; and yet the truth is, not one half of its excellency, power, and efficacy is known. It is not

* Mortification of Sin in Believers.

my business to speak of it in general; but this I say as to my present purpose,—he that would be little in temptation, let him be much in prayer. This calls in the suitable help and succour that is laid up in Christ for us, Heb. iv. 16. This casteth our souls into a frame of opposition to every temptation. When Paul had given instruction for the taking to ourselves “the whole armour of God,” that we may resist and stand in the time of temptation, he adds this general close of the whole, Eph. vi. 18, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication.”

Without this all the rest will be of no efficacy for the end proposed. And therefore consider what weight he lays on it: “Praying always,”—that is, at all times and seasons, or be always ready and prepared for the discharge of that duty, Luke xviii. 1, Eph. vi. 18; “with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,”—putting forth all kinds of desires unto God, that are suited to our condition, according to his will, and which we are assisted in by the Spirit; “and watching thereunto,” lest we be diverted by anything whatever; and that not for a little while, but “with all perseverance,”—continuance lengthened out to the utmost: so shall we stand. The soul so framed is in a sure posture; and this is one of the means without which this work will not be done. If we do not abide in prayer, we shall abide in cursed temptations. Let this, then, be another direction:—Abide in prayer,

and that expressly to this purpose, that we “enter not into temptation.” Let this be one part of our daily contending with God,—that he would preserve our souls, and keep our hearts and our ways, that we be not entangled; that his good and wise providence will order our ways and affairs, that no pressing temptation befall us; that he would give us diligence, carefulness, and watchfulness over our own ways. So shall we be delivered when others are held with the cords of their own folly.

CHAPTER VI.

Of watching that we enter not into temptation—The nature and efficacy of that duty—The first part of it, as to the special seasons of temptation—The first season, in unusual prosperity—The second, in a slumber of grace—Third, a season of great spiritual enjoyment—The fourth, a season of self-confidence.

THE other part of our Saviour's direction,—namely, “to watch,”—is more general, and extends itself to many particulars. I shall fix on some things that are contained therein:—

Watch the *seasons* wherein men usually do “enter into temptation.”

There are sundry seasons wherein an hour of temptation is commonly at hand, and will unavoidably seize upon the soul, unless it be delivered by mercy in the use of watchfulness. When we are under such a season, then are we peculiarly to be upon our guard that we enter not into, that we fall not under, the power of temptation. Some of these seasons may be named:—

(1.) A season of *unusual outward prosperity* is usually accompanied with an hour of temptation. Prosperity and temptation go together; yea, prosperity is a temptation, many temptations, and that because, without eminent supplies of grace, it is apt to cast a soul into a

frame and temper exposed to any temptation, and provides it with fuel and food for all. It hath provision for lust and darts for Satan.

The wise man tells us that the "prosperity of fools destroys them," Prov. i. 32. It *hardens* them in their way, makes them despise instruction, and put the evil day (whose terrors should influence them into amendment) far from them. Without a special assistance, it hath an inconceivably malignant influence on believers themselves. Hence Agur prays against riches, because of the temptation that attends them: "Lest," saith he, "I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD?" Prov. xxx. 8, 9;—lest, being filled with them, he should forget the Lord; as God complains that his people did, Hos. xiii. 6. We know how David was mistaken in this case: Psa. xxx. 6, "I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved." All is well, and will be well. But what was at hand, what lay at the door, that David thought not of. Verse 7, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." God was ready to hide his face, and David to enter into a temptation of desertion, and he knew it not.

As, then, unto a *prosperous* condition. I shall not run cross to Solomon's counsel, "In the day of prosperity rejoice," Eccles. vii. 14. Rejoice in the God of thy mercies, who doth thee good in his patience and forbearance, notwithstanding all thy unworthiness. Yet I may add to it, from the same fountain of wisdom, "Consider,"

also, lest evil lie at the door. A man in that state is in the midst of snares. Satan hath many advantages against him; he forgeth darts out of all his enjoyments; and, if he watch not, he will be entangled before he is aware.

Thou wantest that which should poise and ballast thy heart. Formality in religion will be apt to creep upon thee; and that lays the soul open to all temptations in their full power and strength. Satisfaction and delight in creature-comforts, the poison of the soul, will be apt to grow upon thee. In such a time be vigilant, be circumspect, or thou wilt be surprised. Job says, that in his affliction "God made his heart soft," chap. xxiii. 16. There is a hardness, an insensible want of spiritual sense, gathered in prosperity, that, if not watched against, will expose the heart to the deceits of sin and baits of Satan. "Watch and pray" in this season. Many men's negligence in it hath cost them dear; their woful experience cries out to take heed. Blessed is he that feareth always, but especially in a time of prosperity.

(2.) As in part was manifested before, a time of *the slumber of grace*, of neglect in communion with God, of formality in duty, is a season to be watched in, as that which hath certainly some other temptation attending it.

Let a soul in such an estate awake and look about him. His enemy is at hand, and he is ready to fall into such a condition as may cost him dear all the days of his life. His present estate is bad enough in itself; but

it is an indication of that which is worse that lies at the door. The disciples that were with Christ in the mount had not only a bodily, but a spiritual drowsiness upon them. What says our Saviour to them? "Arise; watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." We know how near one of them was to a bitter hour of temptation, and not watching as he ought, he immediately entered into it.

I mentioned before the case of the spouse, Cant. v. 2-8. She slept, and was drowsy, and unwilling to gird up herself to a vigorous performance of duties, in a way of quick, active communion with Christ. Before she is aware, she hath lost her Beloved; then she moans, inquires, cries, endures woundings, reproaches, and all, before she obtains him again. Consider, then, O poor soul, thy state and condition! Doth thy light burn dim? or though it give to others as great a blaze as formerly, yet thou seest not so clearly the face of God in Christ by it as thou hast done? 2 Cor. iv. 6. Is thy zeal cold? or if it do the same works as formerly, yet thy heart is not warmed with the love of God and to God in them as formerly, but only thou proceedest in the course thou hast been in? Art thou negligent in the duties of praying or hearing? or if thou dost observe them, thou doest it not with that life and vigour as formerly? Dost thou flag in thy profession? or if thou keep it up, yet thy wheels are oiled by sinister respects from within or without? Does thy delight in the people

of God faint and grow cold? or is thy love to them changing from that which is purely spiritual into that which is very carnal, upon the account of suitableness of principles and natural spirits, if not worse foundations? If thou art drowsing in such a condition as this, take heed; thou art falling into some woful temptation that will break all thy bones, and give thee wounds that shall stick by thee all the days of thy life. Yea, when thou awakest, thou wilt find that it hath indeed laid hold of thee already, though thou perceivedst it not; it hath smitten and wounded thee, though thou hast not complained nor sought for relief or healing.

Such was the state of the church of Sardis, Rev. iii. 2. "The things that remained were ready to die." "Be watchful," says our Saviour, "and strengthen them, or a worse thing will befall thee." If any that reads the word of this direction be in this condition, if he hath any regard of his poor soul, let him now awake, before he be entangled beyond recovery. Take this warning from God; despise it not.

(3.) A season of *great spiritual enjoyments* is often, by the malice of Satan and the weakness of our hearts, turned into a season of danger, as to this business of temptation.

We know how the case stood with Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 7. He had glorious spiritual revelations of God and Jesus Christ. Instantly Satan falls upon him, a messenger from him buffets him; so that he earnestly begs its

departure, but yet is left to struggle with it. God is pleased sometimes to give us especial discoveries of himself and his love, to fill the heart with his kindness; Christ takes us into the banqueting-house, and gives our hearts their fills of love; and this by some signal work of his Spirit, overpowering us with a sense of love in the unspeakable privilege of adoption, and so fills our souls with joy unspeakable and glorious. A man would think this was the securest condition in the world. What soul does not cry with Peter in the mount, "It is good for me to be here; to abide here for ever?" But yet very frequently some bitter temptation is now at hand. Satan sees that, being possessed by the joy before us, we quickly neglect many ways of approach to our souls, wherein he seeks and finds advantages against us. Is this, then, our state and condition? Does God at any time give us to drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand, and satisfy our souls with his kindness as with marrow and fatness? Let us not say, "We shall never be moved;" we know not how soon God may hide his face, or a messenger from Satan may buffet us.

Besides, there lies oftentimes a greater and worse deceit in this business. Men cheat their souls with their own fancies, instead of a sense of God's love by the Holy Ghost; and when they are lifted up with their imaginations, it is not expressible how fearfully they are exposed to all manner of temptations,—and how, then, they are able to find relief against their consciences from their

own foolish fancies and deceivings, wherewith they sport themselves? May we not see such every day,—persons walking in the vanities and ways of this world, yet boasting of their sense of the love of God? Shall we believe them? We must not, then, believe truth itself; and how woful, then, must their condition needs be!

(4.) A fourth season is a season of *self-confidence*; then usually temptation is at hand.

The case of Peter is clear unto this: “I will not deny thee; though all men should deny thee I will not; though I were to die for it, I would not do it.” This said the poor man when he stood on the very brink of that temptation that cost him in the issue such bitter tears. And this taught him so far to know himself all his days, and gave him such acquaintance with the state of all believers, that when he had received more of the Spirit and of power, yet he had less of confidence, and saw it was fit that others should have so also, and therefore persuades all men to “pass the time of their sojourning here in fear,” 1 Pet. i. 17; not to be confident and high as he was, lest as he did, they fall. At the first trial he compares himself with others, and vaunts himself above them: “Though all men should forsake thee, yet I will not.” He fears every man more than himself. But when our Saviour afterward comes to him, and puts him directly upon the comparison, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” John xxi. 15, he hath done comparing himself with others, and

only crieth, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." He will lift up himself above others no more. Such a season oftentimes falls out. Temptations are abroad in the world, false doctrines, with innumerable other allurements and provocations: we are ready every one to be very confident that we shall not be surprised with them: though all men should fall into these follies yet we would not: surely we shall never go off from our walking with God; it is impossible our hearts should be so sottish. But says the apostle, "Be not high-minded, but fear; let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Wouldst thou think that Peter, who had walked on the sea with Christ, confessed him to be the Son of God, been with him in the mount, when he heard the voice from the excellent glory, should, at the word of a servant-girl, when there was no legal inquisition after him, no process against him nor any one in his condition, instantly fall a-cursing and swearing that he knew him not? Let them take heed of self-confidence who have any mind to take heed of sin. And this is the first thing in our watching, to consider well the seasons wherein temptation usually makes its approaches to the soul, and be armed against them. And these are some of the seasons wherein temptations are nigh at hand.

CHAPTER VII.

Several acts of watchfulness against temptation proposed—Watch the heart—What it is to be watched in and about—Of the snares lying in men's natural tempers—Of peculiar lusts—Of occasions suited to them—Watching to lay in provision against temptation—Directions for watchfulness in the first approaches of temptation—Directions after entering into temptation.

THAT part of watchfulness against temptation which we have considered regards the outward means, occasions, and advantages of temptation; proceed we now to that which respects the *heart itself*, which is wrought upon and entangled by temptation. Watching or keeping of the heart, which above all keepings we are obliged unto, comes within the compass of this duty also; for the right performance whereof take these ensuing directions:—

(1.) Let him that would not enter into temptation labour to know his own heart, to be acquainted with his own spirit, his natural frame and temper, his lusts and corruptions, his natural, sinful, or spiritual weaknesses, that, finding where his weakness lies, he may be careful to keep at a distance from all occasions of sin.

Our Saviour tells the disciples that “they knew not what spirit they were of;” which, under a pretence of zeal, betrayed them into ambition and desire of revenge. Had they known it they would have watched over them-

selves. David tells us, Psa. xviii. 23, that he considered his ways, and "kept himself from his iniquity," which he was particularly prone unto.

There are advantages for temptations lying oftentimes in men's *natural tempers and constitutions*. Some are naturally gentle, facile, easy to be entreated, pliable; which, though it be the noblest temper of nature, and the best and choicest ground, when well broken up and fallowed for grace to grow in, yet, if not watched over, will be a means of innumerable surprisals and entanglements in temptation. Others are earthly, froward, morose; so that envy, malice, selfishness, peevishness, harsh thoughts of others, repinings, lie at the very door of their natures, and they can scarce step out but they are in the snare of one or other of them. Others are passionate, and the like. Now, he that would watch that he enter not into temptation, had need be acquainted with his own natural temper, that he may watch over the treacheries that lie in it continually. Take heed lest you have a Jehu in you, that shall make you drive furiously; or a Jonah in you, that will make you ready to repine; or a David, that will make you hasty in your determinations, as he was often, in the warmth and goodness of his natural temper. He who watches not this thoroughly, who is not exactly skilled in the knowledge of himself, will never be disentangled from one temptation or another all his days.

Again: as men have peculiar natural tempers, which,

according as they are attended or managed, prove a great *fuel* of sin, or advantage to the exercise of grace, so men may have *peculiar lusts* or corruptions, which, either by their natural constitution or education, and other prejudices, have got deep rooting and strength in them. This, also, is to be found out by him who would not enter into temptation. Unless he know it, unless his eyes be always on it, unless he observe its actings, motions, advantages, it will continually be entangling and ensnaring of him. This, then, is our sixth direction in this kind:—Labour to know *thine own frame* and temper; what spirit thou art of; what associates in thy heart Satan hath; where corruption is strong, where grace is weak; what stronghold lust hath in thy natural constitution, and the like. How many have all their comforts blasted and peace disturbed by their natural passion and peevishness! How many are *rendered useless* in the world by their frowardness and discontent! How many are disquieted even by their own gentleness and facility! Be acquainted, then, with thine own heart: though it be deep, search it; though it be dark, inquire into it; though it give all its distempers other names than what are their due, believe it not. Were not men utter strangers to themselves,—did they not give flattering titles to their natural distempers,—did they not strive rather to justify, palliate, or excuse the evils of their hearts, that are suited to their natural tempers and constitutions, than to destroy them, and by these means keep themselves off

from taking a clear and distinct view of them,—it were impossible that they should all their days hang in the same briers without attempt for deliverance. Uselessness and scandal in professors are branches growing constantly on this root of unacquaintedness with their own frame and temper; and how few are there who will either study them themselves, or bear with those who would acquaint them with them!

(2.) When thou knowest the *state and condition* of thy heart as to the particulars mentioned, watch against all such occasions and opportunities, employments, societies, retirements, businesses, as are apt to entangle thy natural temper or provoke thy corruption.

It may be there are some ways, some societies, some businesses, that thou never in thy life escapedst them, but sufferedst by them more or less, through their suitableness to entice or provoke thy corruption; it may be thou art in a state and condition of life that weary thee day by day, on the account of thy ambition, passion, discontent, or the like: if thou hast any love to thy soul, it is time for thee to awake and to deliver thyself as a bird from the evil snare. Peter will not come again in haste to the high priest's hall; nor would David walk again on the top of his house, when he should have been on the high places of the field. But the particulars of this instance are so various, and of such several natures in respect of several persons, that it is impossible to enumerate them, Prov. iv. 14, 15. Herein lies no small

part of that wisdom which consists in our ordering our conversation aright. Seeing we have so little power over our hearts when once they meet with suitable provocations, we are to keep them asunder, as a man would do fire and the combustible parts of the house wherein he dwells.

(3.) Be sure to lay in *provision* in store against the approaching of any temptation.

This also belongs to our watchfulness over our hearts. You will say, "What provision is intended, and where is it to be laid up?" Our hearts, as our Saviour speaks, are our treasury. There we lay up whatever we have, good or bad; and thence do we draw it for our use, Matt. xii. 35. It is the heart, then, wherein provision is to be laid up against temptation. When an enemy draws nigh to a fort or castle to besiege and take it, oftentimes, if he find it well manned and furnished with provision for a siege, and so able to hold out, he withdraws and assaults it not. If Satan, the prince of this world, come and find our hearts fortified against his batteries, and provided to hold out, he not only departs, but, as James says, he flees: "He will flee from us," James iv. 7. For the provision to be laid up, it is that which is provided in the gospel for us. Gospel provisions will do this work; that is, keep the heart full of a sense of the love of God in Christ. This is the greatest preservative against the power of temptation in the world. Joseph had this; and therefore, on the first appearance of tempta-

tion, he cries out, "How can I do this great evil, and sin against God?" and there is an end of temptation as to him; it lays no hold on him, but departs. He was furnished with such a ready sense of the love of God as temptation could not stand before, Gen. xxxix. 9. "The love of Christ constraineth us," saith the apostle, "to live to him," 2 Cor. v. 14; and so, consequently, to withstand temptation. A man may, nay, he ought to lay in provisions of the law also,—fear of death, hell, punishment, with the terror of the Lord in them. But these are far more easily conquered than the other; nay, they will never stand alone against a vigorous assault. They are conquered in convinced persons every day; hearts stored with them will struggle for a while, but quickly give over. But store the heart with a sense of the love of God in Christ, with the eternal design of his grace, with a taste of the blood of Christ, and his love in the shedding of it; get a relish of the privileges we have thereby,—our adoption, justification, acceptance with God; fill the heart with thoughts of the beauty of holiness, as it is designed by Christ for the end, issue, and effect of his death;—and thou wilt, in an ordinary course of walking with God, have great peace and security as to the disturbance of temptations. When men can live and plod on in their profession, and not be able to say when they had any living sense of the love of God, or of the privileges which we have in the blood of Christ, I know not what they can have to keep them from falling

into snares. The apostle tells us that the “peace of God,” *φρουρήσει τὰς καρδίας*, Phil. iv. 7, “shall keep our hearts.” *Φρουρά* is a military word,—a garrison; and so *φρουρήσει* is, “shall keep as in a garrison.” Now, a garrison hath two things attending it,—first, That it is exposed to the assaults of its enemies; secondly, That safety lies in it from their attempts. It is so with our souls; they are exposed to temptations, assaulted continually; but if there be a garrison in them, or if they be kept as in a garrison, temptation shall not enter, and consequently we shall not enter into temptation. Now, how is this done? Saith he, “The peace of God shall do it.” What is this “peace of God?” A sense of his love and favour in Jesus Christ. Let this abide in you, and it shall garrison you against all assaults whatever. Besides, there is that, in an especial manner, which is also in all the rest of the directions,—namely, that the thing itself lies in a direct opposition to all the ways and means that temptation can make use of to approach unto our souls. Contending to obtain and keep a sense of the love of God in Christ, in the nature of it, obviates all the workings and insinuations of temptation. Let this be a third direction, then, in our watching against temptation:—Lay in store of gospel provisions, that may make the soul a defenced place against all the assaults thereof:—

(4.) In the first approach of any temptation, as we are all tempted, these directions following are also suited to

carry on the work of watching, which we are in the pursuit of:—

[1.] Be always awake, that thou mayst have an *early discovery* of thy temptation, that thou mayst know it so to be. Most men perceive not their enemy until they are wounded by him. Yea, others may sometimes see them deeply engaged, whilst themselves are utterly insensible; they sleep without any sense of danger, until others come and awake them by telling them that their house is on fire. Temptation in a neuter sense is not easily discoverable,—namely, as it denotes such a way, or thing, or matter, as is or may be made use of for the ends of temptation. Few take notice of it until it is too late, and they find themselves entangled, if not wounded. Watch, then, to understand betimes the snares that are laid for thee,—to understand the advantages thy enemies have against thee, before they get strength and power, before they are incorporated with thy lusts, and have distilled poison into thy soul.

[2.] Consider the *aim* and tendency of the temptation, whatever it be, and of all that are concerned in it. Those who have an active concurrence into thy temptation are Satan and thy own lusts. For thine own lust, I have manifested elsewhere what it aims at in all its actings and enticings. It never rises up but its intention is the worst of evils. Every acting of it would be a formed enmity against God. Hence look upon it in its first attempts, what pretences soever may be made,

as thy mortal enemy. "I hate it," saith the apostle, Rom. vii. 15,—that is, the working of lust in me. "I hate it; it is the greatest enemy I have. Oh, that it were killed and destroyed! Oh, that I were delivered out of the power of it!" Know, then, that in the first attempt or assault in any temptation, the most cursed, sworn enemy is at hand, is setting on thee, and that for thy utter ruin; so that it were the greatest madness in the world to throw thyself into his arms to be destroyed. But of this I have spoken in my discourse of Mortification.

Hath Satan any more friendly aim and intention towards thee, who is a sharer in every temptation? To beguile thee as a serpent, to devour thee as a lion, is the friendship that he owes thee. I shall only add, that the sin he tempts thee to, against the law, is not the thing that he aims at; his design lies against thy interest in the gospel. He would make sin but a bridge to get over to a better ground, to assault thee as to thy interest in Christ. He who perhaps will say to-day, "Thou mayst venture on sin, because thou hast an interest in Christ," will to-morrow tell thee to the purpose that thou hast none, because thou hast done so.

[3.] *Meet* thy temptation in its entrance with *thoughts of faith* concerning Christ on the cross; this will make it sink before thee. Entertain no parley, no dispute with it, if thou wouldst not enter into it. Say, "It is Christ that died,"—that died for such sins as these."

This is called "taking the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of Satan," Eph. vi. 16. Faith doth it by laying hold on Christ crucified, his love therein, and what from thence he suffered for sin. Let thy temptation be what it will,—be it unto sin, to fear or doubting for sin, or about thy state and condition,—it is not able to stand before faith lifting up the standard of the cross. We know what means the Papists, who have lost the power of faith, use to keep up the form. They will sign themselves with the sign of the cross, or make aerial crosses; and by virtue of that work done, think to scare away the devil. To act faith on Christ crucified is really to sign ourselves with the sign of the cross, and thereby shall we overcome that wicked one, 1 Pet. v. 9.

[4.] Suppose the soul hath been *surprised* by temptation, and entangled at unawares, so that now it is too late to resist the first entrances of it, what shall such a soul do that it be not plunged into it, and carried away with the power thereof?

1st. Do as Paul did: beseech God again and again that it may "depart from thee," 2 Cor. xii. 8. And if thou abidest therein, thou shalt certainly either be speedily delivered out of it, or receive a sufficiency of grace not to be foiled utterly by it. Only, as I said in part before, do not so much employ thy thoughts about the things whereunto thou art tempted, which oftentimes raiseth further entanglements, but set thyself against the temptation itself. Pray against the temptation that it

may depart; and when that is taken away, the things themselves may be more calmly considered.

2dly. Fly to Christ, in a peculiar manner, as he was tempted, and beg of him to give thee succour in this “needful time of trouble.” Heb. ii. 18, the apostle instructs us herein: “In that he hath been tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” This is the meaning of it: “When you are tempted and are ready to faint, when you want succour,—you must have it or you die,—act faith peculiarly on Christ as he was tempted; that is, consider that he was tempted himself,—that he suffered thereby,—that he conquered all temptations, and that not merely on his own account, seeing for our sakes he submitted to be tempted, but for us,” (he conquered in and by himself, but for us.) And draw, yea, expect succour from him, Heb. iv. 15, 16. Lie down at his feet, make thy complaint known to him, beg his assistance, and it will not be in vain.

3dly. Look to Him who hath *promised deliverance*. Consider that he is faithful, and will not suffer thee to be tempted above what thou art able. Consider that he hath promised a comfortable issue of these trials and temptations. Call all the promises to mind of assistance and deliverance that he hath made; ponder them in thy heart. And rest upon it, that God hath innumerable ways that thou knowest not of, to give thee in deliverance; as,—

(1st.) He can send an *affliction* that shall mortify thy

heart unto the matter of the temptation, whatever it be, that that which was before a sweet morsel under the tongue shall neither have taste nor relish in it unto thee, —thy desire to it shall be killed; as was the case with David: or,

(2dly.) He can, by *some providence*, alter that whole state of things from whence thy temptation doth arise, so taking fuel from the fire, causing it to go out of itself; as it was with the same David in the day of battle: or,

(3dly.) He can *tread down Satan under thy feet*, that he shall not dare to suggest anything more to thy disadvantage (the God of peace shall do it), that thou shalt hear of him no more: or,

(4thly.) He can give thee such *supply of grace* as that thou mayst be freed, though not from the temptation itself, yet from the tendency and danger of it; as was the case with Paul: or,

(5thly.) He can give thee such a comfortable persuasion of *good success* in the issue as that thou shalt have refreshment in thy trials, and be kept from the trouble of the temptation; as was the case with the same Paul: or,

(6thly.) He can *utterly remove* it, and make thee a complete conqueror. And innumerable other ways he hath of keeping thee from entering into temptation, so as to be foiled by it.

4thly. Consider where the temptation wherewith thou

art surprised hath made its entrance, and by what means, and with all speed make up the breach. Stop that passage which the waters have made to enter in at. Deal with thy soul like a wise physician. Inquire when, how, by what means, thou fellest into this distemper; and if thou findest negligence, carelessness, want of keeping watch over thyself, to have lain at the bottom of it, fix thy soul there,—bewail that before the Lord,—make up that breach,—and then proceed to the work that lies before thee.

CHAPTER VIII.

The last general direction, Rev. iii. 10: Watch against temptation by constant "keeping the word of Christ's patience"—What that word is—How it is kept—How the keeping of it will keep us from the "hour of temptation."

THE directions insisted on in the former chapters are such as are partly given us, in their several particulars, up and down the Scripture; partly arise from the nature of the thing itself. There is one general direction remains, which is comprehensive of all that went before, and also adds many more particulars unto them. This contains an approved antidote against the poison of temptation,—a remedy that Christ himself hath marked with a note of efficacy and success; that is given us, Rev. iii. 10, in the words of our Saviour himself to the church of Philadelphia. "Because," saith he, "thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell in the earth." Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." As he dealt with the church of Philadelphia, so will he deal with us. If we "keep the word of his patience," he will "keep us from the hour of temptation." This, then, being a way of rolling the whole care of this weighty affair on

him who is able to bear it, it requires our peculiar consideration.

And, therefore, I shall show,—(1.) What it is to “keep the word of Christ’s patience,” that we may know how to perform our duty; and, (2.) How this will be a means of our preservation, which will establish us in the faith of Christ’s promise.

(1.) The word of Christ is the word of the gospel; the word by him revealed from the bosom of the Father; the word of the Word; the word spoken in time by the eternal Word. So it is called “the word of Christ,” Col. iii. 16; or “the gospel of Christ,” Rom. i. 16, 1 Cor. ix. 12; and “the doctrine of Christ,” Heb. vi. 1. “of Christ,” that is, as its author, Heb. i. 1, 2; and of him, as the chief subject or matter of it, 2 Cor. i. 20. Now, this word is called “the word of Christ’s patience,” or tolerance and forbearance, upon the account of that patience and long-suffering which, in the dispensation of it, the Lord Christ exerciseth towards the world, and to all persons in it; and that both actively and passively, in his bearing with men, and enduring from them:—

[1.] He is patient towards his *saints*; he bears with them, suffers from them. He is “patient to us-ward,” 2 Pet. iii. 9,—that is, that believe. The gospel is the word of Christ’s patience even to believers. A soul acquainted with the gospel knows that there is no property of Christ rendered more glorious therein than that of his patience. That he should bear with so many unkindnesses, so many

causeless breaches, so many neglects of his love, so many affronts done to his grace, so many violations of engagements as he doth, it manifests his gospel to be not only the word of his grace but also of his patience. He suffers also *from* them in all the reproaches they bring upon his name and ways; and he suffers *in* them, for "in all their afflictions he is afflicted."

[2.] Towards his *elect* not yet effectually called. Rev. iii. 20, he stands waiting at the door of their hearts and knocks for an entrance. He deals with them by all means, and yet stands and waits until "his head is filled with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night," Cant. v. 2; as enduring the cold and inconveniences of the night, that when his morning is come he may have entrance. Oftentimes for a long season he is by them scorned in his person, persecuted in his saints and ways, reviled in his word, whilst he stands at the door in the word of his patience, with his heart full of love towards their poor rebellious souls.

[3.] To the *perishing world*. Hence the time of his kingdom in this world is called the time of his "patience," Rev. i. 9. He "endures the vessels of wrath with much long-suffering," Rom. ix. 22. Whilst the gospel is administered in the world he is patient towards the men thereof, until the saints in heaven and earth are astonished and cry out, "How long?" Psa. xiii. 1, 2; Rev. vi. 10. And themselves do mock at him as if he were an idol, 2 Pet. iii. 4. He endures from them bitter things, in his

name, ways, worship, saints, promises, threats, all his interest of honour and love; and yet passeth by them, lets them alone, does them good. Nor will he cut this way of proceeding short until the gospel shall be preached no more. Patience must accompany the gospel.

Now, this is the word that is to be kept, that we may be kept from "the hour of temptation."

(2.) Three things are implied in the keeping of this word: [1.] Knowledge; [2.] Valuation; [3.] Obedience:—

[1.] *Knowledge*. He that will keep this word must know it, be acquainted with it, under a fourfold notion:—*1st*. As a word of *grace* and *mercy*, to save him; *2dly*. As a word of *holiness* and *purity*, to sanctify him; *3dly*. As a word of *liberty* and *power*, to ennoble him and set him free; *4thly*. As a word of *consolation*, to support him in every condition:—

1st. As a word of *grace* and *mercy*, able to save us: "It is the power of God unto salvation," Rom. i. 16; "the grace of God that bringeth salvation," Tit. ii. 11; "the word of grace that is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified," Acts xx. 32; "the word that is able to save our souls," James i. 21. When the word of the gospel is known as a word of mercy, grace, and pardon, as the sole evidence for life, as the conveyance of an eternal inheritance; when the soul finds it such to itself, it will strive to keep it.

2dly. As a word of *holiness* and *purity*, able to sanctify him: "Ye are clean through the word I have spoken unto you," saith our Saviour, John xv. 3. To that purpose is his prayer, chap. xvii. 17. He that knows not the word of Christ's patience as a sanctifying, cleansing word, in the power of it upon his own soul, neither knows it nor keeps it. The empty profession of our days knows not one step towards this duty; and thence it is that the most are so overborne under the power of temptations. Men full of self, of the world, of fury, ambition, and almost all unclean lusts, do yet talk of keeping the word of Christ! See 1 Pet. i. 2; 2 Tim. ii. 19.

3dly. As a word of *liberty* and *power*, to ennoble him and set him free;—and this not only from the guilt of sin and from wrath, for that it doth as it is a word of grace and mercy; not only from the power of sin, for that it doth as it is a word of holiness; but also from all outward respects of men or the world that might entangle him or enslave him. It declares us to be "Christ's freemen," and in bondage unto none, John viii. 32; 1 Cor. vii. 23. We are not by it freed from due subjection unto superiors, nor from any duty, nor unto any sin, 1 Pet. ii. 16; but in two respects it is a word of freedom, liberty, largeness of mind, power, and deliverance from bondage:—

(1st.) In respect of *conscience* as to the worship of God, Gal. v. 1.

(2dly.) In respect of *ignoble*, slavish respects unto the

men or things of the world, in the course of our pilgrimage. The gospel gives a free, large, and noble spirit, in subjection to God, and none else. There is administered in it a spirit “not of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,” 2 Tim. i. 7; a mind “in nothing terrified,” Phil. i. 28, —not swayed with any by-respect whatever. There is nothing more unworthy of the gospel than a mind in bondage to persons or things, prostituting itself to the lusts of men or affrightments of the world. And he that thus knows the word of Christ’s patience, really and in power, is even thereby freed from innumerable, from unspeakable temptations.

4thly. As a word of *consolation*, to support him in every condition, and to be a full portion in the want of all. It is a word attended with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” It gives supportment, relief, refreshment, satisfaction, peace, consolation, joy, boasting, glory, in every condition whatever. Thus to know the word of Christ’s patience, thus to know the gospel, is the first part, and it is a great part, of this condition of our preservation from the hour and power of temptation.

[2.] *Valuation* of what is thus known belongs to the keeping of this word. It is to be kept as a treasure. 2 Tim. i. 14, *Τὴν καλὴν παρακαταθήκην*,—that excellent “depositum” (that is, the word of the gospel),—“keep it,” saith the apostle, “by the Holy Ghost;” and, “Hold fast the faithful word,” Tit. i. 9. It is a good treasure, a faithful word; hold it fast. It is a word that com-

prises the whole interest of Christ in the world. To value that as our chiefest treasure is to keep the word of Christ's patience. They that will have a regard from Christ in the time of temptation, are not to be regardless of his concernments.

[3.] *Obedience.* Personal obedience, in the universal observation of all the commands of Christ, is the keeping of his word, John xiv. 15. Close adherence unto Christ in holiness and universal obedience, then when the opposition that the gospel of Christ doth meet withal in the world doth render it signally "the word of his patience," is the life and soul of the duty required.

Now, all these are to be so managed with that intention of mind and spirit, that care of heart and diligence of the whole person, as to make up a keeping of this word; which evidently includes all these considerations.

We are arrived, then, to the sum of this safeguarding duty, of this condition of freedom from the power of temptation:—He that, having a due acquaintance with the gospel in its excellencies, as to him a word of mercy, holiness, liberty, and consolation, values it, in all its concernments, as his choicest and only treasure,—makes it his business and the work of his life to give himself up unto it in universal obedience, then especially when opposition and apostasy put the patience of Christ to the utmost,—he shall be preserved from the hour of temptation.

This is that which is comprehensive of all that went

before, and is exclusive of all other ways for the obtaining of the end proposed. Nor let any man think without this to be kept one hour from entering into temptation; wherever he fails, there temptation enters. That this will be a sure preservative may appear from the ensuing considerations:—

(1.) It hath the *promise* of preservation, and this alone hath so. It is solemnly promised, in the place mentioned, to the church of Philadelphia on this account. When a great trial and temptation was to come on the world, at the opening of the seventh seal, Rev. vii. 3, a caution is given for the preservation of God's sealed ones, which are described to be those who keep the word of Christ; for the promise is that it should be so.

Now, in every promise there are three things to be considered:—[1.] The *faithfulness* of the Father, who gives it. [2.] The *grace* of the Son, which is the matter of it. [3.] The *power* and *efficacy* of the Holy Ghost, which puts the promise in execution. And all these are engaged for the preservation of such persons from the hour of temptation.

[1.] The *faithfulness* of God accompanieth the promise. On this account is our deliverance laid, 1 Cor. x. 13. Though we be tempted, yet we shall be kept from the hour of temptation; it shall not grow too strong for us. What comes on us we shall be able to bear; and what would be too hard for us we shall escape. But what security have we hereof? Even the faithfulness of

God: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you," etc. And wherein is God's faithfulness seen and exercised? "He is faithful that promised," Heb. x. 23; his faithfulness consists in his discharge of his promises. "He abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself," 2 Tim. ii. 13. So that by being under the promise, we have the faithfulness of God engaged for our preservation.

[2.] There is in every promise of the covenant *the grace of the Son*; that is the subject-matter of all promises: "I will keep thee." How? "By my grace with thee." So that what assistance the grace of Christ can give a soul that hath a right in this promise, in the hour of temptation it shall enjoy it. Paul's temptation grew very high; it was likely to have come to its prevalent hour. He "besought the Lord," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, for help, 2 Cor. xii. 8; and received that answer from him, "My grace is sufficient for thee," verse 9. That it was the Lord Christ and his grace with whom he had peculiarly to do, is evident from the close of that verse: "I will glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me;" or "the efficacy of the grace of Christ in my preservation be made evident." So Heb. ii. 18.

[3.] The *efficacy* of the Spirit accompanieth the promises. He is called "The Holy Spirit of promise;" not only because he is promised by Christ, but also because he effectually makes good the promise, and gives it accomplishment in our souls. He also, then, is engaged to

preserve the soul walking according to the rule laid down. See Isa. lix. 21. Thus, where the promise is, there is all this assistance. The faithfulness of the Father, the grace of the Son, the power of the Spirit, all are engaged in our preservation.

(2.) This *constant, universal* keeping of Christ's word of patience will keep the heart and soul in such a frame, as wherein no prevalent temptation, by virtue of any advantages whatever, can seize upon it, so as totally to prevail against it. So David prays, Psa. xxv. 21, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me." This integrity and uprightness is the Old-Testament keeping the word of Christ,—universal close walking with God. Now, how can they preserve a man? Why, by keeping his heart in such a frame, so defended on every side, that no evil can approach or take hold on him. Fail a man in his integrity, he hath an open place for temptation to enter, Isa. lvii. 21. To keep the word of Christ, is to do it universally, as hath been showed. This exercises grace in all the faculties of the soul, and compasses it with the whole armour of God. The understanding is full of light; the affections, of love and holiness. Let the wind blow from what quarter it will, the soul is fenced and fortified; let the enemy assault when or by what means he pleaseth, all things in the soul of such a one are upon the guard; "How can I do this thing, and sin against God?" is at hand. Especially, upon a two-

fold account doth deliverance and security arise from his hand:—

[1.] By the *mortification* of the heart unto the matter of temptations. The prevalency of any temptation arises from hence, that the heart is ready to close with the matter of it. There are lusts within, suited to the proposals of the world or Satan without. Hence James resolves all temptations into our “own lusts,” chap. i. 14; because either they proceed from or are made effectual by them, as hath been declared. Why do terror or threats turn us aside from a due constancy in the performance of our duty? Is it not because there is unmortified, carnal fear abiding in us, that tumultuates in such a season? Why is it that the allurements of the world and compliances with men entangle us? Is it not because our affections are entangled with the things and considerations proposed unto us? Now, keeping the word of Christ’s patience, in the manner declared, keeps the heart mortified to these things, and so it is not easily entangled by them. Saith the apostle, Gal. ii. 20, “I am crucified with Christ.” He that keeps close to Christ is crucified with him, and is dead to all the desires of the flesh and the world; as more fully, chap. vi. 14. Here the match is broken, and all love, entangling love, dissolved. The heart is crucified to the world and all things in it. Now the matter of all temptations almost is taken out of the world; the men of it, or the things of it, make them up. “As to these things,” says the apostle,

“I am crucified to them,” (and it is so with every one that keeps the word of Christ). “My heart is mortified unto them. I have no desire after them, nor affection to them, nor delight in them, and they are crucified unto me. The crowns, glories, thrones, pleasures, profits of the world, I see nothing desirable in them. The lusts, sensual pleasures, love, respects, honours of men, name and reputation among them, they are all as a thing of nought. I have no value nor estimation of them.” This soul is safeguarded from assaults of manifold temptations. When Achan saw the “goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold,” first he “coveted them,” then he “took them,” Josh. vii. 21. Temptation subtilly spreads the Babylonish garment of favour, praise, peace, the silver of pleasure or profit, with the golden contentments of the flesh, before the eyes of men. If now there be that in them alive, unmortified, that will presently fall a-coveting, let what fear of punishment will ensue, the heart or hand will be put forth unto iniquity.

Herein, then, lies the security of such a frame as that described: It is always accompanied with a mortified heart, crucified unto the things that are the matter of our temptations; without which it is utterly impossible that we should be preserved one moment when any temptation doth befall us. If liking, and love of the things proposed, insinuated, commended in the tempta-

tion, be living and active in us, we shall not be able to resist and stand.

[2.] In this frame the heart is *filled with better things* and their excellency, so far as to be fortified against the matter of any temptation. See what resolution this puts Paul upon, Phil. iii. 8; all is “loss and dung” to him. Who would go out of his way to have his arms full of loss and dung? And whence is it that he hath this estimation of the most desirable things in the world? It is from that dear estimation he had of the excellency of Christ. So, verse 10, when the soul is exercised to communion with Christ, and to walking with him, he drinks new wine, and cannot desire the old things of the world, for he says “The new is better.” He tastes every day how gracious the Lord is; and therefore longs not after the sweetness of forbidden things,—which indeed have none. He that makes it his business to eat daily of the tree of life will have no appetite unto other fruit, though the tree that bare them seem to stand in the midst of paradise. This the spouse makes the means of her preservation; even the excellency which, by daily communion, she found in Christ and his graces above all other desirable things. Let a soul exercise itself to a communion with Christ in the good things of the gospel,—pardon of sin, fruits of holiness, hope of glory, peace with God, joy in the Holy Ghost, dominion over sin,—and he shall have a mighty preservative against all temptations. As the full soul loatheth the honey-comb,—as a

soul filled with carnal, earthly, sensual contentments finds no relish nor savour in the sweetest spiritual things; so he that is satisfied with the kindness of God, as with marrow and fatness,—that is, every day entertained at the banquet of wine, wine upon the lees, and well refined,—hath a holy contempt of the baits and allurements that lie in prevailing temptations, and is safe.

(3.) He that so keeps the word of Christ's patience is always furnished with *preserving considerations* and preserving principles,—moral and real advantages of preservation.

[1.] He is furnished with preserving *considerations*, that powerfully influence his soul in his walking diligently with Christ. Besides the sense of duty which is always upon him, he considers,—

1st. The *concernment* of Christ, whom his soul loves, in him and his careful walking. He considers that the presence of Christ is with him, his eyes upon him; that he ponders his heart and ways, as one greatly concerned in his deportment of himself, in a time of trial. So Christ manifests himself to do, Rev. ii. 19–23. He considers all,—what is acceptable, what is to be rejected. He knows that Christ is concerned in his honour, that his name be not evil spoken of by reason of him; that he is concerned in love to his soul, having that design upon him to “present him holy, and unblamable, and unreprouable in his sight,” Col. i. 22,—and his Spirit is grieved where he is interrupted in this work; concerned

on the account of his gospel, the progress and acceptance of it in the world,—its beauty would be slurred, its good things reviled, its progress stopped, if such a one be prevailed against; concerned in his love to others, who are grievously scandalized, and perhaps ruined, by the miscarriages of such. When Hymeneus and Philetus fell, they overthrew the faith of some. And says such a soul, then, who is exercised to keep the word of Christ's patience, when intricate, perplexed, entangling temptations, public, private, personal do arise, "Shall I now be careless? shall I be negligent? shall I comply with the world and the ways of it? Oh, what thoughts of heart hath he concerning me, whose eye is upon me! Shall I condemn his honour, despise his love, trample his gospel in the mire under the feet of men, turn aside others from his ways? Shall such a man as I fly, give over resisting? It cannot be." There is no man who keeps the word of the patience of Christ but is full of this soul-pressing consideration. It dwells on his heart and spirit; and the love of Christ constrains him so to keep his heart and ways, 2 Cor. v. 14.

2dly. The great consideration of *the temptations of Christ* in his behalf, and the conquest he made in all assaults for his sake and his God, dwell also on his spirit. The prince of this world came upon him, everything in earth or hell that hath either allurements or affrightment in it was proposed to him, to divert him from the work of mediation which for us he had undertaken.

This whole life he calls the time of his “temptations;” but he resisted all, conquered all, and is become a Captain of salvation to them that obey him. “And,” says the soul, “shall this temptation, these arguings, this plausible pretence, this sloth, this self-love, this sensuality, this bait of the world, turn me aside, prevail over me, to desert him who went before me in the ways of all temptations that his holy nature was obnoxious unto, for my good?”

3dly. *Dismal thoughts* of the *loss of love*, of the smiles of the countenance of Christ, do also frequently exercise such a soul. He knows what it is to enjoy the favour of Christ, to have a sense of his love, to be accepted in his approaches to him, to converse with him, and perhaps hath been sometimes at some loss in this thing; and so knows also what it is to be in the dark, distanced from him. See the deportment of the spouse in such a case, Cant. iii. 4. When she has once found him again, she holds him; she will not let him go; she will lose him no more.

[2.] He that keeps the word of Christ’s patience hath preserving *principles* whereby he is acted. Some of them may be mentioned:—

1st. In all things he lives by *faith*, and is acted by it in all his ways, Gal. ii. 20. Now, upon a twofold account hath faith, when improved, the power of preservation from temptation annexed unto it:—

(1st.) Because it empties the soul of its *own wisdom*,

understanding, and fulness, that it may act in the wisdom and fulness of Christ. The only advice for preservation in trials and temptations lies in that of the wise man, Prov. iii. 5, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." This is the *work* of faith; it *is* faith; it is to *live* by faith. The great [cause of] falling of men in trials is their leaning to, or leaning upon, their own understanding and counsel. What is the issue of it? Job xviii. 7, "The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down." First, he shall be entangled, and then cast down; and all by his own counsel, until he come to be ashamed of it, as Ephraim was, Hos. x. 6. Whenever in our trials we consult our own understandings, hearken to self-reasonings, though they seem to be good, and tending to our preservation, yet the principle of living by faith is stifled, and we shall in the issue be cast down by our own counsels. Now, nothing can empty the heart of this self-fulness but faith, but living by it, but not living to ourselves, but having Christ live in us by our living by faith on him.

(2dly.) Faith, making the soul poor, empty, helpless, destitute in itself, *engages* the heart, will, and power of Jesus Christ for assistance; of which I have spoken more at large elsewhere.

2dly. *Love* to the saints, with care that they suffer not upon our account, is a great preserving principle in a time of temptations and trials. How powerful this was

in David, he declares in that earnest prayer, Psa. lxix. 6, "Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel;"—"O let not me so miscarry, that those for whom I would lay down my life should be put to shame, be evil spoken of, dishonoured, reviled, contemned on my account, for my failings." A selfish soul, whose love is turned wholly inwards, will never abide in a time of trial.

Many other considerations and principles that those who keep the word of Christ's patience, in the way and manner before described, are attended withal, might be enumerated; but I shall content myself to have pointed at these mentioned.

And will it now be easy to determine whence it is that so many in our days are prevailed on in the time of trial—that the hour of temptation comes upon them, and bears them down more or less before it? Is it not because, amongst the great multitude of professors that we have, there are few that keep the word of the patience of Christ? If we wilfully neglect or cast away our interest in the promise of preservation, is it any wonder if we be not preserved? There is an hour of temptation come upon the world, to try them that dwell therein. It variously exerts its power and efficacy. There is not any way or thing wherein it may not be seen acting and putting forth itself. In worldliness; in sensuality; in looseness of conversation; in neglect of spiritual duties,

private, public; in foolish, loose, diabolical opinions; in haughtiness and ambition; in envy and wrath; in strife and debate, revenge, selfishness; in atheism and contempt of God, doth it appear. They are but branches of the same root, bitter streams of the same fountain, cherished by peace, prosperity, security, apostasies of professors, and the like. And, alas! how many do daily fall under the power of this temptation in general! How few keep their garments girt about them, and undefiled! And if any urging, particular temptation befall any, what instances almost have we of any that escape? May we not describe our condition as the apostle that of the Corinthians, in respect of an outward visitation: "Some are sick, and some are weak, and many sleep?" Some are wounded, some defiled, many utterly lost. What is the spring and fountain of this sad condition of things? Is it not, as hath been said?—we do not keep the word of Christ's patience in universal close walking with him, and so lose the benefits of the promise given and annexed thereunto.

Should I go about to give instances of this thing, of professors coming short of keeping the word of Christ, it would be a long work. These four heads would comprise the most of them:—First *Conformity* to the world, which Christ hath redeemed us from, almost in all things, with joy and delight in promiscuous compliances with the men of the world. Secondly, *Neglect* of duties which Christ hath enjoined, from close meditation to public

ordinances. Thirdly, *Strife*, variance, and debate among ourselves, woeful judging and despising one another, upon account of things foreign to the bond of communion that is between the saints. Fourthly, *Self-fulness* as to principles, and selfishness as to ends. Now, where these things are, are not men carnal? Is the word of Christ's patience effectual in them? Shall they be preserved? They shall not.

Would you, then, be preserved and kept from the hour of temptation? would you watch against entering into it?—as deductions from what hath been delivered in this chapter, take the ensuing cautions:—

1. Take heed of leaning on deceitful assistances; as,—

(1.) On your own *counsels*, understandings, reasonings. Though you argue in them never so plausibly in your own defence, they will leave you, betray you. When the temptation comes to any height, they will all turn about, and take part with your enemy, and plead as much for the matter of the temptation, whatever it be, as they pleaded against the end and issue of it before.

(2.) The most vigorous actings, by prayer, fasting, and other such means, against that *particular lust*, corruption, temptation, wherewith you are exercised and have to do. This will not avail you if, in the meantime, there be neglects on other accounts. To hear a man wrestle, cry, contend as to any particular of temptation, and immediately fall into worldly ways, worldly compliances,

looseness, and negligence in other things,—it is righteous with Jesus Christ to leave such a one to the hour of temptation.

(3.) The general *security* of saints' perseverance and preservation from total apostasy. Every security that God gives us is good in its kind, and for the purpose for which it is given to us; but when it is given for one end, to use it for another, that is not good or profitable. To make use of the general assurance of preservation from total apostasy, to support the spirit in respect of a particular temptation, will not in the issue advantage the soul; because, notwithstanding that, this or that temptation may prevail. Many relieve themselves with this, until they find themselves in the depth of perplexities.

2. Apply yourselves to this great preservation of faithful keeping the word of Christ's patience, in the midst of all trials and temptations:—

(1.) In particular, wisely consider wherein the word of Christ's patience is most likely to suffer in the days wherein we live and the seasons that pass over us, and so vigorously set yourselves to keep it in that particular peculiarly. You will say, "How shall we know wherein the word of Christ's patience in any season is like to suffer?" I answer, Consider what works he peculiarly performs in any season; and neglect of his word in reference to them is that wherein his word is like to suffer. The works of Christ wherein he hath been peculiarly engaged in our days and seasons seem to be these:—

[1.] The *pouring of contempt* upon the great men and great things of the world, with all the enjoyments of it. He hath discovered the nakedness of all earthly things, in overturning, overturning, overturning, both men and things, to make way for the things that cannot be shaken.

[2.] The *owning of the lot* of his own inheritance in a distinguishing manner, putting a difference between the precious and the vile, and causing his people to dwell alone, as not reckoned with the nations.

[3.] In being *nigh* to faith and prayer, honouring them above all the strength and counsels of the sons of men.

[4.] In recovering his *ordinances* and institutions from the carnal administrations that they were in bondage under by the lusts of men, bringing them forth in the beauty and the power of the Spirit.

Wherein, then, in such a season, must lie the peculiar neglect of the word of Christ's patience? Is it not in setting a value on the world and the things of it, which he hath stained and trampled under foot? Is it not in the slighting of his peculiar lot, his people, and casting them into the same considerations with the men of the world? Is it not in leaning to our own counsels and understandings? Is it not in the defilement of his ordinances, by giving the outward court of the temple to be trod upon by unsanctified persons? Let us, then, be watchful, and in these things keep the word of the patience of Christ, if we love our own preservation.

(2.) In this frame urge the Lord Jesus Christ with his blessed promises, with all the considerations that may be apt to take and hold the King in his galleries, that may work on the heart of our blessed and merciful High Priest, to give suitable succour at time of need.

CHAPTER IX.

General exhortation to the duty prescribed.

HAVING thus passed through the considerations of the duty of watching that we enter not into temptation, I suppose I need not add motives to the observance of it. Those who are not moved by their own sad experiences, nor the importance of the duty, as laid down in the entrance of this discourse, must be left by me to the further patience of God. I shall only shut up the whole with a general exhortation to them who are in any measure prepared for it by the consideration of what hath been spoken. Should you go into an hospital, and see many persons lying sick and weak, sore and wounded, with many filthy diseases and distempers, and should inquire of them how they fell into this condition, and they shall all agree to tell you such or such a thing was the occasion of it,—“By that I got my wound,” says one, “And my disease,” says another,—would it not make you a little careful how or what you had to do with that thing or place? Surely it would. Should you go to a dungeon, and see many miserable creatures bound in chains for an approaching day of execution, and inquire the way and means whereby they were brought

into that condition, and they should all fix on one and the same thing, would you not take care to avoid it? The case is so with entering into temptation. Ah! how many poor, miserable, spiritually-wounded souls, have we everywhere!—one wounded by one sin, another by another; one falling into filthiness of the flesh, another of the spirit. Ask them, now, how they came into this estate and condition? They must all answer, “Alas! we entered into temptation, we fell into cursed snares and entanglements; and that hath brought us into the woeful condition you see!” Nay, if a man could look into the dungeons of hell, and see the poor damned souls that lie bound in chains of darkness, and hear their cries, what would he be taught? What do they say? Are they not cursing their tempters, and the temptations that they entered in? And shall we be negligent in this thing? Solomon tells us that the “simple one that follows the strange woman knows not that the dead are there, that her house inclineth to death, and her paths to the dead” (which he repeats three times); and that is the reason that he ventures on her snares. If you knew what hath been done by entering into temptation, perhaps you would be more watchful and careful. Men may think that they shall do well enough notwithstanding; but, “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?” Prov. vi. 27, 28. No such thing; men come not out of their temptation without wounds, burn-

ings, and scars. I know not any place in the world where there is more need of pressing this exhortation than in this place. Go to our several colleges, inquire for such and such young men; what is the answer in respect of many? "Ah! such a one was very hopeful for a season; but he fell into ill company, and he is quite lost. Such a one had some good beginning of religion, and we were in great expectation of him; but he is fallen into temptation." And so in other places. "Such a one was useful and humble, adorned the gospel; but now he is so wofully entangled with the world that he is grown all self, hath no sap nor savour. Such a one was humble and zealous; but he is advanced, and hath lost his first love and ways." Oh! how full is the world, how full is this place, of these woful examples; to say nothing of those innumerable poor creatures who are fallen into temptation by delusions in religion. And is it not time for us to awake before it be too late,—to watch against the first risings of sin, the first attempts of Satan, and all ways whereby he hath made his approaches to us, be they never so harmless in themselves?

Have we not experience of our weakness, our folly, *the invincible power* of temptation, when once it is gotten within us? As for this duty that I have insisted on, take these considerations:—

1. If you neglect it, it being the only means prescribed by our Saviour, you will certainly enter into temptation, and as certainly fall into sin. Flatter not

yourselves. Some of you are "old disciples;" have a great abhorrency of sin; you think it impossible you should ever be seduced so and so; but, "Let him (whoever he be) that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." It is not any grace received, it is not any experience obtained, it is not any resolution improved, that will preserve you from any evil, unless you stand upon your watch: "What I say unto you," says Christ, "I say unto all, Watch." Perhaps you may have had some good success for a time in your careless frame; but awake, admire God's tenderness and patience, or evil lies at the door. If you will not perform this duty, whoever you are, one way or other, in one thing or other, spiritual or carnal wickedness, you will be tempted, you will be defiled; and what will be the end thereof? Remember Peter!

2. Consider that you are always under the eye of Christ, the great captain of our salvation, who hath enjoined us to watch thus, and pray that we enter not into temptation. What think you are the thoughts and what the heart of Christ, when he sees a temptation hastening towards us, a storm rising about us, and we are fast asleep? Doth it not grieve him to see us expose ourselves so to danger, after he hath given us warning upon warning? Whilst he was in the days of his flesh he considered his temptation whilst it was yet coming, and armed himself against it. "The prince of this world cometh," says he, "but hath no part in

me." And shall we be negligent under his eye? Do but think that thou seest him coming to thee as he did to Peter, when he was asleep in the garden, with the same reproof: "What! canst thou not watch one hour?" Would it not be a grief to thee to be so reproved, or to hear him thundering against thy neglect from heaven, as against the church of Sardis? Rev. iii. 2.

3. Consider that if thou neglect this duty, and so fall into temptation,—which assuredly thou wilt do,—that when thou art entangled God may withal bring some heavy affliction or judgment upon thee, which by reason of thy entanglement, thou shalt not be able to look on any otherwise than as an evidence of his anger and hatred; and then what wilt thou do with thy temptation and affliction together? All thy bones will be broken, and thy peace and strength will be gone in a moment. This may seem but as a noise of words for the present; but if ever it be thy condition, thou wilt find it to be full of woe and bitterness. Oh! then, let us strive to keep our spirits unentangled, avoiding all appearance of evil and all ways leading thereunto; especially all ways, businesses, societies, and employments that we have already found disadvantageous to us.

OF THE

MORTIFICATION OF SIN

IN

BELIEVERS;

THE

NECESSITY, NATURE, AND MEANS OF IT:

WITH

A RESOLUTION OF SUNDRY CASES OF CONSCIENCE
THEREUNTO BELONGING.



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PREFATORY NOTE.

BY THE REV. W. H. GOOLD, EDINBURGH.



IT sheds interesting light on the character and resources of Owen, if the circumstances in which the following treatise was composed are borne in mind. It was published in 1656, and its author was at the time Dean of Christ Church and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, restoring it, by a course of mingled kindness and decision, from the ruinous condition into which it had lapsed during the civil wars, and raising it to such prosperity as to extort the praises of Clarendon. He was preaching, each alternate Sabbath, those sermons which lingered in the memory and strengthened the piety of Philip Henry. He was frequently summoned to London on momentous consultations respecting public affairs, and to preach before the Parliament. As if this amount of toil were not sufficient to occupy him,—toil so great that, in his noble address on resigning the vice-chancellorship of the University, he describes himself as having been “*sæpius mortis proximus*” — the Council of State had imposed on him the task of replying to Biddle the Socinian; and he fulfilled it by the production of his elaborate and masterly work, “*Vindiciæ Evangelicæ*,”—a bulwark of the faith, so solid in its foundation, and so massy in its proportions, that the entire phalanx of Socinian authorship has shrunk from the attempt to assail it. In the next year, and but a few months after this great work had appeared, as if his secular labours in the management of the University, his own heavy share in the burden of public affairs, and the rough duties of controversy, could not arrest the progress of grace in his own soul, or deaden his zeal for the promotion of vital godliness around him, he gave to the world this treatise, “*On the Mortification of Sin in Believers*.”

We learn from the preface, that it embodies what he had preached with such acceptance that "sundry persons, in whose hearts are the ways of God," pressed him to publish it. He had a desire also to correct certain "dangerous mistakes" into which some preachers or writers of that day had fallen, who recommended and enforced a process of mortifying sin which was not conducted on evangelical principles, and only tended to ensnare the conscience, and foster self-righteousness and superstition. The directions which our author gives in order to subdue the power of internal corruption are at the furthest remove from all the arts and practices of a hollow asceticism. There is no trace in this work of the morbid and dreamy tone of kindred treatises, which have emerged from a life of cloistered seclusion. Our author's knowledge of human nature, in its real elements, and as it appears in the wide arena of life, is only surpassed by his acquaintance with the truths of the word, and their bearing on the experience and workings of every heart. The reader is made to feel, above all things, that the only cross on which he can nail his every lust to its utter destruction, is, not the devices of a self-inflicted maceration, but the tree on which Christ hung, made a curse for us.

After an analysis and explanation of the passage in Scripture (Rom. viii. 13) on which the treatise is based, some general principles are deduced and expounded. What follows is designed—first, to show wherein the real mortification of sin consists; secondly, to assign general directions, without which no sin can be spiritually mortified; and, lastly, to unfold at length and in detail specific and particular directions for this important spiritual exercise.

The treatise has been so much a favourite, that it passed through several editions in the author's lifetime. It is given here as corrected and enlarged in the second edition (1658), though by some oversight modern reprints of it have been always taken from the first. The estimate of its value indicated by the number of the early editions, is confirmed by the circumstance, that it has since obtained the especial recommendation of Mr. Wilberforce. (See his "Practical View," etc. p. 392.)—ED.

PREFACE.

CHRISTIAN READER,—I shall in a few words acquaint thee with the reasons that obtained my consent to the publishing of the ensuing discourse. The consideration of the present state and condition of the generality of professors, the visible evidences of the frame of their hearts and spirits, manifesting a great disability of dealing with the temptations wherewith, from the peace they have in the world and the divisions that they have among themselves, they are encompassed, holds the chief place amongst them. This I am assured is of so great importance, that if hereby I only occasion others to press more effectually on the consciences of men the work of considering their ways, and to give more clear direction for the compassing of the end proposed, I shall well esteem of my lot in this undertaking. This was seconded by an observation of some men's dangerous mistakes, who of late days have taken upon them to give directions for the mortification of sin, who, being unacquainted with the mystery of the gospel and the efficacy of the death of Christ, have anew imposed the yoke of a self-wrought-out mortification on the necks of their disciples, which neither they nor their forefathers were ever able to bear. A mortification they cry up and press, suitable to that of the gospel neither in respect of nature, subject, causes, means, nor effects; which constantly produces the deplorable issues of superstition, self-righteousness, and anxiety of conscience in them who take up the burden which is so bound for them.

What is here proposed in weakness, I humbly hope will answer the spirit and letter of the gospel, with the experiences of them who know what it is to walk with God, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. So that if not this, yet certainly something of this kind, is very necessary at this season for the promotion and furtherance of this work of gospel mortification in the hearts of believers, and their direction in paths safe, and wherein they may find rest to their souls. Something I have to add as to what in particular relates unto myself.

Having preached on this subject unto some comfortable success, through the grace of Him that administereth seed to the sower, I was pressed by sundry persons, in whose hearts are the ways of God, thus to publish what I had delivered, with such additions and alterations as I should judge necessary. Under the inducement of their desires, I called to remembrance the debt, wherein I have now for some years stood engaged unto sundry noble and worthy Christian friends, as to a treatise of Communion with God, some while since promised to them ;* and thereon apprehended, that if I could not hereby compound for the greater debt, yet I might possibly tender them this discourse of *variance with themselves*, as interest for their forbearance of that of *peace and communion with God*. Besides, I considered that I had been providentially engaged in the public debate of sundry controversies in religion, which might seem to claim something in another kind of more general use, as a fruit of choice, not necessity. On these and like accounts is this short discourse brought forth to public view, and now presented unto thee. I hope I may own in sincerity, that my heart's desire unto God, and the chief design of my life in the station wherein the good providence of God hath placed me, are, that mortification and universal holiness may be promoted in my own and in the hearts and ways of others, to the glory of God ; that so the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ may be adorned in all things : for the compassing of which end, if this little discourse (of the publishing whereof this is the sum of the account I shall give) may in anything be useful to the least of the saints, it will be looked on as a return of the weak prayers wherewith it is attended by its unworthy author,

JOHN OWEN.

* Since the first edition of this treatise, that other also is published.

OF THE

MORTIFICATION OF SIN IN BELIEVERS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

The foundation of the whole ensuing discourse laid in Rom. viii. 13—The words of the apostle opened—The certain connection between true mortification and salvation—Mortification the work of believers—The Spirit the principal efficient cause of it—What meant by “the body” in the words of the apostle—What by “the deeds of the body”—Life, in what sense promised to this duty.

THAT what I have of direction to contribute to the carrying on of the work of mortification in believers may receive order and perspicuity, I shall lay the foundation of it in those words of the apostle, Rom. viii. 13, “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live;” and reduce the whole to an improvement of the great evangelical truth and mystery contained in them.

The apostle having made a recapitulation of his doctrine of justification by faith, and the blessed estate and condition of them who are made by grace partakers thereof, verses 1–3 of this chapter, proceeds to improve it to the holiness and consolation of believers.

Among his arguments and motives unto holiness, the verse mentioned containeth one from the contrary events and effects of holiness and sin: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." What it is to "live after the flesh," and what it is to "die," that being not my present aim and business, I shall no otherwise explain than as they will fall in with the sense of the latter words of the verse, as before proposed.

In the words peculiarly designed for the foundation of the ensuing discourse, there is,

First, A *duty* prescribed: "Mortify the deeds of the body."

Secondly, The persons are denoted to *whom* it is prescribed: "Ye,"—"if ye mortify."

Thirdly, There is in them a *promise* annexed to that duty: "Ye shall live."

Fourthly, The *cause* or means of the performance of this duty,—the Spirit: "If ye through the Spirit."

Fifthly, The *conditionality* of the whole proposition, wherein duty, means, and promise are contained: "If ye," etc.

1. The first thing occurring in the words, as they lie in the entire proposition, is the conditional note, *Ei δὲ*, "But if." Conditionals in such propositions may denote two things:—

(1.) The *uncertainty* of the *event* or thing promised, in respect of them to whom the duty is prescribed. And this takes place where the condition is absolutely neces-

sary unto the issue, and depends not itself on any determinate cause known to him to whom it is prescribed. So we say, "If we live, we will do such a thing." This cannot be the intendment of the conditional expression in this place. Of the persons to whom these words are spoken, it is said, verse 1 of the same chapter, "There is no condemnation to them."

(2.) The *certainty* of the *coherence* and connection that is between the things spoken of; as we say to a sick man, "If you will take such a potion, or use such a remedy, you will be well." The thing we solely intend to express is the certainty of the connection that is between the potion or remedy and health. And this is the use of it here. The certain connection that is between the *mortifying* of the deeds of the body and *living* is intimated in this conditional particle.

Now, the connection and coherence of things being manifold, as of cause and effect, of way and means and the end, this between mortification and life is not of cause and effect properly and strictly,—for "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ," Rom. vi. 23,—but of means and end. God hath appointed this means for the attaining that end, which he hath freely promised. Means, though necessary, have a fair subordination to an end of free promise. A gift, and procuring cause in him to whom it is given, are inconsistent. The intendment, then, of this proposition as conditional is, that there is a certain infallible connection and coherence

between true mortification and eternal life: if you use this means, you shall obtain that end; if you do mortify, you shall live. And herein lies the main motive unto and enforcement of the duty prescribed.

2. The next thing we meet withal in the words is the *persons* to whom this duty is prescribed, and that is expressed in the word “Ye,” in the original included in the verb, *θανατοῦτε*, “if ye mortify;”—that is, ye believers; ye to whom “there is no condemnation,” verse 1; ye that are “not in the flesh, but in the Spirit,” verse 9; who are “quickened by the Spirit of Christ,” verses 10, 11; to you is this duty prescribed. The pressing of this duty immediately on any other is a notable fruit of that superstition and self-righteousness that the world is full of,—the great work and design of devout men ignorant of the gospel, Rom. x. 3, 4; John xv. 5. Now, this description of the persons, in conjunction with the prescription of the duty, is the main foundation of the ensuing discourse, as it lies in this thesis or proposition:—

The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin.

3. The principal *efficient cause* of the performance of this duty is the Spirit: *Εἰ δὲ Πνεύματι*,—“If by the Spirit.” The Spirit here is the Spirit mentioned verse 11, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, that “dwells in

us," verse 9, that "quickens us," verse 11; "the Holy Ghost," verse 14;* the "Spirit of adoption," verse 15; the Spirit "that maketh intercession for us," verse 26. All other ways of mortification are vain, all helps leave us helpless; it must be done by the Spirit. Men, as the apostle intimates, Rom. ix. 30-32, may attempt this work on other principles, by means and advantages administered on other accounts, as they always have done, and do: but, saith he, "This is the work of the Spirit; by him alone is it to be wrought, and by no other power is it to be brought about." Mortification from a self-strength, carried on by ways of self-invention, unto the end of a self-righteousness, is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world. And this is a second principle of my ensuing discourse.

4. The *duty* itself, "Mortify the deeds of the body," is next to be remarked.

Three things are here to be inquired into:—(1.) What is meant by *the body*; (2.) What by *the deeds of the body*; (3.) What by *mortifying* of them.

(1.) *The body* in the close of the verse is the same with *the flesh* in the beginning: "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye mortify the deeds of the body,"—that is, of the flesh. It is that which the apostle hath all along discoursed of, under the name of *the flesh*; which is evident from the prosecution of the

* There seems to be an oversight here, as the expression "Holy Ghost" does not occur in the verse cited.—ED.

antithesis between the Spirit and the flesh, before and after. *The body*, then, here is taken for that corruption and depravity of our natures whereof the body, in a great part is the seat and instrument, the very members of the body being made servants unto unrighteousness thereby, Rom. vi. 19. It is indwelling sin, the corrupted flesh or lust, that is intended. Many reasons might be given of this metonymical expression, that I shall not now insist on. The “body” here is the same with παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος, and σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, the “old man,” and the “body of sin,” Rom. vi. 6; or it may synecdochically express the whole person considered as corrupted, and the seat of lusts and distempered affections.

(2.) *The deeds of the body.* The word is πράξεις, which, indeed, denoteth the outward actions chiefly, “the works of the flesh,” as they are called, τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, Gal. v. 19; which are there said to be “manifest,” and are enumerated. Now, though the outward deeds are here only expressed, yet the inward and next causes are chiefly intended; the “axe is to be laid at the root of the tree,” — the deeds of the flesh are to be mortified in their causes, from whence they spring. The apostle calls them *deeds*, as that which every lust tends unto; though it do but conceive and prove abortive, it aims to bring forth a perfect sin.

Having, both in the seventh and the beginning of this chapter, treated of indwelling lust and sin as the fountain and principle of all sinful actions, he here mentions

its destruction under the name of the effects which it doth produce. Πράξεις τοῦ σώματος are, as much as φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός, Rom. viii. 6, the “wisdom of the flesh,” by a metonymy of the same nature with the former; or as the παθήματα and ἐπιθυμίαι, the “passions and lusts of the flesh,” Gal. v. 24, whence the deeds and fruits of it do arise; and in this sense is *the body* used, Rom. viii. 10: “The body is dead because of sin.”

(3.) To *mortify*. Εἰ θανατοῦτε.—“If ye put to death;” a metaphorical expression, taken from the putting of any living thing to death. To kill a man, or any other living thing, is to take away the principle of all his strength, vigour, and power, so that he cannot act or exert, or put forth any proper actings of his own; so it is in this case. Indwelling sin is compared to a person, a living person, called “the old man,” with his faculties, and properties, his wisdom, craft, subtlety, strength; this, says the apostle, must be killed, put to death, mortified,—that is, have its power, life, vigour, and strength, to produce its effects, taken away by the Spirit. It is, indeed, meritoriously, and by way of example, utterly mortified and slain by the cross of Christ; and the “old man” is thence said to be “crucified with Christ,” Rom. vi. 6, and ourselves to be “dead” with him, verse 8, and really initially in regeneration, Rom. vi. 3–5, when a principle contrary to it, and destructive of it, Gal. v. 17, is planted in our hearts; but the whole work is by degrees to be carried on towards perfection all our days. Of this more in the

process of our discourse. The intendment of the apostle in this prescription of the duty mentioned is,—that *the mortification of indwelling sin remaining in our mortal bodies, that it may not have life and power to bring forth the works or deeds of the flesh, is the constant duty of believers.*

5. The *promise* unto this duty is life: “Ye shall live.” The life promised is opposed to the death threatened in the clause foregoing, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;” which the same apostle expresseth, “Ye shall of the flesh reap corruption,” Gal. vi. 8, or destruction from God. Now, perhaps the word may not only intend eternal life, but also the spiritual life in Christ, which here we have; not as to the essence and being of it, which is already enjoyed by believers, but as to the joy, comfort, and vigour of it: as the apostle says in another case, “Now I live, if ye stand fast,” 1 Thess. iii. 8;—“Now my life will do me good; I shall have joy and comfort with my life;”—“Ye shall live, lead a good, vigorous, comfortable, spiritual life whilst you are here, and obtain eternal life hereafter.”

Supposing what was said before of the connection between mortification and eternal life, as of means and end, I shall add only, as a second motive to the duty prescribed, that,—

The vigour, and power, and comfort of our spiritual life depend on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh.

CHAPTER II.

The principal assertion concerning the necessity of mortification proposed to confirmation—Mortification the duty of the best believers, Col. iii. 5; 1 Cor. ix. 27—Indwelling sin always abides; no perfection in this life, Phil. iii. 12; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; 2 Pet. iii. 18; Gal. v. 17, etc.—The activity of abiding sin in believers, Rom. vii. 23; James iv. 5; Heb. xii. 1—Its fruitfulness and tendency—Every lust aims at the height in its kind—The Spirit and new nature given to contend against indwelling sin, Gal. v. 17; 2 Pet. i. 4, 5; Rom. vii. 23—The fearful issue of the neglect of mortification, Rev. iii. 2; Heb. iii. 13—The first general principle of the whole discourse hence confirmed—Want of this duty lamented.

HAVING laid this foundation, a brief confirmation of the fore-mentioned principal deductions will lead me to what I chiefly intend,—

1. *That the choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin.*

So the apostle, Col. iii. 5, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.” Whom speaks he to? Such as were “risen with Christ,” verse 1; such as were “dead” with him, verse 3; such as whose life Christ was, and who should “appear with him in glory,” verse 4. Do you mortify; do you make it your daily

work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you. Your being dead with Christ virtually, your being quickened with him, will not excuse you from this work. And our Saviour tells us how his Father deals with every branch in him that beareth fruit, every true and living branch. "He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit," John xv. 2. He prunes it, and that not for a day or two, but whilst it is a branch in this world. And the apostle tells you what was his practice, 1 Cor. ix. 27, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." "I do it," saith he, "daily; it is the work of my life: I omit it not; this is my business." And if this were the work and business of Paul, who was so incomparably exalted in grace, revelations, enjoyments, privileges, consolations, above the ordinary measure of believers, where may we possibly bottom an exemption from this work and duty whilst we are in this world? Some brief account of the reasons hereof may be given:—

1. Indwelling sin always *abides* whilst we are in this world; therefore it is always to be mortified. The vain, foolish, and ignorant disputes of men about perfect keeping the commands of God, of perfection in this life, of being wholly and perfectly dead to sin, I meddle not now with. It is more than probable that the men of those abominations never knew what belonged to the keeping of any one of God's commands, and are so much below perfection of degrees, that they never attained to

a perfection of parts in obedience, or universal obedience in sincerity. And, therefore, many in our days who have talked of perfection have been wiser, and have affirmed it to consist in knowing no difference between good and evil. Not that they are perfect in the things we call good, but that all is alike to them, and the height of wickedness is their perfection. Others who have found out a new way to it, by denying original, indwelling sin, and attempering the spirituality of the law of God unto men's carnal hearts, as they have sufficiently discovered themselves to be ignorant of the life of Christ and the power of it in believers, so they have invented a new righteousness that the gospel knows not of, being vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds. For us, who dare not be wise above what is written, nor boast by other men's lines of what God hath done for us, we say that indwelling sin lives in us, in some measure and degree, whilst we are in this world. We dare not speak as "though we had already attained, or were already perfect, Phil. iii. 12. Our inward man is to be renewed day by day" whilst here we live, 2 Cor. iv. 16; and according to the renovations of the new, are the breaches and decays of the old. Whilst we are here we "know but in part," 1 Cor. xiii. 12, having a remaining darkness to be gradually removed by our "growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. iii. 18; and "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would," Gal. v. 17: and are

therefore defective in our obedience as well as in our light, 1 John i. 8. We have a "body of death," Rom. vii. 24; from whence we are not delivered but by the death of our bodies, Phil. iii. 21. Now, it being our duty to mortify, to be killing of sin whilst it is in us, we must be at work. He that is appointed to kill an enemy, if he leave striking before the other ceases living, doth but half his work, Gal. vi. 9; Heb. xii. 1; 2 Cor. vii. 1.

2. Sin doth not only still abide in us, but is still *acting*, still labouring to bring forth the deeds of the flesh. When sin lets us alone we may let sin alone; but as sin is never less quiet than when it seems to be most quiet, and its waters are for the most part deep when they are still, so ought our contrivances against it to be vigorous at all times and in all conditions, even where there is least suspicion. Sin doth not only abide in us, but "the law of the members is still rebelling against the law of the mind," Rom. vii. 23; and "the spirit that dwells in us lusteth to envy," James iv. 5. It is always in continual work; "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," Gal. v. 17; lust is still tempting and conceiving sin, James i. 14; in every moral action it is always either inclining to evil, or hindering from that which is good, or disframing the spirit from communion with God. It inclines to evil. "The evil which I would not, that I do," saith the apostle, Rom. vii. 19. Whence is that? Why, "Because in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." And it hinders from good: "The good

that I would do, that I do not," verse 19;—"Upon the same account, either I do it not, or not as I should; all my holy things being defiled by this sin." "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," Gal. v. 17. And it unframes our spirit, and thence is called "The sin that so easily besets us," Heb. xii. 1; on which account are those grievous complaints that the apostle makes of it, Rom. vii. So that sin is always acting, always conceiving, always seducing and tempting. Who can say that he had ever anything to do with God or for God, that indwelling sin had not a hand in the corrupting of what he did? And this trade will it drive more or less all our days. If, then, sin will be always acting, if we be not always mortifying, we are lost creatures. He that stands still and suffers his enemies to double blows upon him without resistance, will undoubtedly be conquered in the issue. If sin be subtle, watchful, strong, and always at work in the business of killing our souls, and we be slothful, negligent, foolish, in proceeding to the ruin thereof, can we expect a comfortable event? There is not a day but sin foils or is foiled, prevails or is prevailed on; and it will be so whilst we live in this world.

I shall discharge him from this duty who can bring sin to a composition, to a cessation of arms in this warfare; if it will spare him any one day, in any one duty (provided he be a person that is acquainted with the spirituality of obedience and the subtlety of sin), let him say to

his soul, as to this duty, "Soul, take thy rest." The saints, whose souls breathe after deliverance from its perplexing rebellion, know there is no safety against it, but in a constant warfare.

3. Sin will not only be striving, acting, rebelling, troubling, disquieting, but if let alone, if not continually mortified, it will *bring forth great, cursed, scandalous, soul-destroying sins*. The apostle tells us what the works and fruits of it are, Gal. v. 19-21, "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." You know what it did in David and sundry others. Sin aims always at the utmost; every time it rises up to tempt or entice, might it have its own course, it would go out to the utmost sin in that kind. Every unclean thought or glance would be adultery if it could; every covetous desire would be oppression, every thought of unbelief would be atheism, might it grow to its head. Men may come to that, that sin may not be heard speaking a scandalous word in their hearts, — that is, provoking to any great sin with scandal in its mouth; but yet every rise of lust, might it have its course, would come to the height of villany: it is like the grave, that is never satisfied. And herein lies no small share of the deceitfulness of sin, by which it prevails to the hardening of men, and so to their ruin, Heb. iii. 13. It is modest,

as it were, in its first motions and proposals, but having once got footing in the heart by them, it constantly makes good its ground, and presseth on to some farther degrees in the same kind. This new acting and pressing forward makes the soul take little notice of what an entrance to a falling off from God is already made; it thinks all is indifferent well if there be no farther progress; and so far as the soul is made insensible of any sin, — that is, as to such a sense as the gospel requireth, — so far it is hardened: but sin is still pressing forward, and that because it hath no bounds but utter relinquishment of God and opposition to him. That it proceeds towards its height by degrees, making good the ground it hath got by hardness, is not from its nature, but its deceitfulness. Now nothing can prevent this but mortification; that withers the root and strikes at the head of sin every hour, so that whatever it aims at, it is crossed in. There is not the best saint in the world, but, if he should give over this duty, would fall into as many cursed sins as ever any did of his kind.

4. This is one main reason why the Spirit and the new nature is given unto us, — that we may have a principle within whereby to oppose sin and lust. “The flesh lusteth against the spirit.” Well! and what then? Why, “the spirit also lusteth against the flesh,” Gal. v. 17. There is a propensity in the spirit, or spiritual new nature, to be acting against the flesh, as well as in the flesh to be acting against the spirit: so 2 Pet. i. 4, 5.

It is our participation of the divine nature that gives us an escape from the pollutions that are in the world through lust; and, Rom. vii. 23, there is a law of the mind, as well as a law of the members. Now this is, first, the most unjust and unreasonable thing in the world, when two combatants are engaged, to bind one and keep him up from doing his utmost, and to leave the other at liberty to wound him at his pleasure; and, secondly, the foolishhest thing in the world to bind him who fights for our eternal salvation, and to let him alone who seeks and violently attempts our everlasting ruin. The contest is for our lives and souls. Not to be daily employing the Spirit and new nature for the mortifying of sin, is to neglect that excellent succour which God hath given us against our greatest enemy. If we neglect to make use of what we have received, God may justly hold his hand from giving us more. His graces, as well as his gifts, are bestowed on us to use, exercise, and trade with. Not to be daily mortifying sin, is to sin against the goodness, kindness, wisdom, grace, and love of God, who hath furnished us with a principle of doing it.

5. Negligence in this duty casts the soul into a perfect contrary condition to that which the apostle affirms was his, 2 Cor. iv. 16, "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." In these the inward man perisheth, and the outward man is renewed day by day. Sin is as the house of David, and

grace as the house of Saul. *Exercise* and *success* are the two main cherishers of grace in the heart; when it is suffered to lie still, it withers and decays: the things of it are ready to die, Rev. iii. 2; and sin gets ground towards the hardening of the heart, Heb. iii. 13. This is that which I intend: by the omission of this duty grace withers, lust flourisheth, and the frame of the heart grows worse and worse; and the Lord knows what desperate and fearful issues it hath had with many. Where sin, through the neglect of mortification, gets a considerable victory, it breaks the bones of the soul, Psa. xxxi. 10, li. 8, and makes a man weak, sick, and ready to die, Psa. xxxviii. 3-5, so that he cannot look up, Psa. xl. 12, Isa. xxxiii. 24; and when poor creatures will take blow after blow, wound after wound, foil after foil, and never rouse up themselves to a vigorous opposition, can they expect anything but to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and that their souls should bleed to death? 2 John 8. Indeed, it is a sad thing to consider the fearful issues of this neglect, which lie under our eyes every day. See we not those, whom we knew humble, melting, broken-hearted Christians, tender and fearful to offend, zealous for God and all his ways, his Sabbaths and ordinances, grown through a neglect of watching unto this duty, earthly, carnal, cold, wrathful, complying with the men of the world and things of the world, to the scandal of religion and the fearful temptation of them that know them? The truth is, what between placing

mortification in a rigid, stubborn frame of spirit, which is for the most part earthly, legal, censorious, partial, consistent with wrath, envy, malice, pride, on the one hand, and pretences of liberty, grace, and I know not what, on the other, true evangelical mortification is almost lost amongst us: of which afterward.

6. It is our duty to be “perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” 2 Cor. vii. 1; to be “growing in grace” every day, 1 Pet. ii. 2, 2 Pet. iii. 18; to be “renewing our inward man day by day,” 2 Cor. iv. 16. Now, this cannot be done without the daily mortifying of sin. Sin sets its strength against every act of holiness, and against every degree we grow to. Let not that man think he makes any progress in holiness who treads not on the necks of his lusts. He who doth not kill sin in his way, takes no steps towards his journey’s end. He who finds not opposition from it, and who sets not himself in every particular to its mortification, is at peace with it, not dying to it.

This, then, is the first general principle of our ensuing discourse: Notwithstanding the meritorious mortification, if I may so speak, of all and every sin in the cross of Christ; notwithstanding the real foundation of universal mortification laid in our first conversion, by conviction of sin, humiliation for sin, and the implantation of a new principle opposite to it and destructive of it; — yet sin doth so remain, so act and work in the best of believers, whilst they live in this world, that the constant daily

mortification of it is all their days incumbent on them. Before I proceed to the consideration of the next principle, I cannot but by the way complain of many professors of these days, who, instead of bringing forth such great and evident fruits of mortification as are expected, scarce bear any leaves of it. There is, indeed, a broad light fallen upon the men of this generation, and together therewith many spiritual gifts communicated, which, with some other considerations, have wonderfully enlarged the bounds of professors and profession; both they and it are exceedingly multiplied and increased. Hence there is a noise of religion and religious duties in every corner, preaching in abundance, — and that not in an empty, light, trivial, and vain manner, as formerly, but to a good proportion of a spiritual gift, — so that if you will measure the number of believers by light, gifts, and profession, the church may have cause to say, “Who hath borne me all these?” But now if you will take the measure of them by this great discriminating grace of Christians, perhaps you will find their number not so multiplied. Where almost is that professor who owes his conversion to these days of light, and so talks and professes at such a rate of spirituality as few in former days were, in any measure, acquainted with, (I will not judge them, but perhaps boasting what the Lord hath done in them), that doth not give evidence of a miserably unmortified heart? If vain spending of time, idleness, unprofitableness in men’s places, envy, strife, variance, emulations, wrath,

pride, worldliness, selfishness, 1 Cor. i., be badges of Christians, we have them on us and amongst us in abundance. And if it be so with them who have much light, and which, we hope, is saving, what shall we say of some who would be accounted religious and yet despise gospel light, and for the duty we have in hand, know no more of it but what consists in men's denying themselves sometimes in outward enjoyments, which is one of the outmost branches of it, which yet they will seldom practise? The good Lord send out a spirit of mortification to cure our distempers, or we are in a sad condition!

There are two evils which certainly attend every unmortified professor;—the first, in himself; the other, in respect of others:—

1. *In himself.* Let him pretend what he will, he hath *slight thoughts of sin*; at least, of sins of daily infirmity. The root of an unmortified course is the digestion of sin without bitterness in the heart. When a man hath confirmed his imagination to such an apprehension of grace and mercy as to be able, without bitterness, to swallow and digest daily sins, that man is at the very brink of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Neither is there a greater evidence of a false and rotten heart in the world than to drive such a trade. To use the blood of Christ, which is given to *cleanse* us, 1 John i. 7, Tit. ii. 14; the exaltation of Christ, which is to give us *repentance*, Acts v. 31; the doctrine of grace, which teaches us to *deny all*

ungodliness, Tit. ii. 11, 12, to countenance sin, is a rebellion that in the issue will break the bones. At this door have gone out from us most of the professors that have apostatized in the days wherein we live. For a while they were most of them under convictions; these kept them unto duties, and brought them to profession; so they "escaped the pollutions that are in the world, through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. ii. 20: but having got an acquaintance with the doctrine of the gospel, and being weary of duty, for which they had no principle, they began to countenance themselves in manifold neglects from the doctrine of grace. Now, when once this evil had laid hold of them, they speedily tumbled into perdition.

2. *To others.* It hath an evil influence on them on a twofold account:—

(1.) It *hardens* them, by begetting in them a persuasion that they are in as good condition as the best professors. Whatever they see in them is so stained for want of this mortification that it is of no value with them. They have a zeal for religion; but it is accompanied with want of forbearance and universal righteousness. They deny prodigality, but with worldliness; they separate from the world, but live wholly to themselves, taking no care to exercise loving-kindness in the earth; or they talk spiritually, and live vainly; mention communion with God, and are every way conformed to the world; boasting of forgiveness of sin, and never forgiving others.

And with such considerations do poor creatures harden their hearts in their unregeneracy.

(2.) They *deceive* them, in making them believe that if they can come up to their condition, it shall be well with them; and so it grows an easy thing to have the great temptation of repute in religion to wrestle withal, when they may go far beyond them as to what appears in them, and yet come short of eternal life. But of these things and all the evils of unmortified walking, afterward.

CHAPTER III.

The second general principle of the means of mortification proposed to confirmation—The Spirit the only author of this work—Vanity of popish mortification discovered—Many means of it used by them not appointed of God—Those appointed by him abused—The mistakes of others in this business—The Spirit is promised believers for this work, Ezek. xi. 19, xxxvi. 26—All that we receive from Christ is by the Spirit—How the Spirit mortifies sin—Gal. v. 19-23—The several ways of his operation to this end proposed—How his work and our duty.

THE next principle relates to the great sovereign cause of the mortification treated of; which, in the words laid for the foundation of this discourse, is said to be the Spirit—that is, the Holy Ghost, as was evinced.

II. *He only is sufficient for this work; all ways and means without him are as a thing of nought; and he is the great efficient of it,—he works in us as he pleases.*

1. In vain do men seek other remedies; they shall not be healed by them. What several ways have been prescribed for this, to have sin mortified, is known. The greatest part of popish religion, of that which looks most like religion in their profession, consists in mistaken ways and means of mortification. This is the pretence of their rough garments, whereby they deceive. Their vows, orders, fastings, penances, are all built on this ground;

they are all for the mortifying of sin. Their preachings, sermons, and books of devotion, all look this way. Hence, those who interpret the locusts that came out of the bottomless pit, Rev. ix. 3, to be the friars of the Romish church, who are said to torment men, so “that they should seek death and not find it,” verse 6, think that they did it by their stinging sermons, whereby they convinced them of sin, but being not able to discover the remedy for the healing and mortifying of it, they kept them in such perpetual anguish and terror, and such trouble in their consciences, that they desired to die. This, I say, is the substance and glory of their religion; but what with their labouring to mortify dead creatures, ignorant of the nature and end of the work, —what with the poison they mixed with it, in their persuasion of its merit, yea, *supererogation* (as they style their unnecessary merit, with a proud, barbarous title), —their glory is their shame: but of them and their mortification more afterward, chap. vii.

That the ways and means to be used for the mortification of sin invented by them are still insisted on and prescribed, for the same end, by some who should have more light and knowledge of the gospel, is known. Such directions to this purpose have of late been given by some, and are greedily caught at by others professing themselves Protestants, as might have become popish devotionists three or four hundred years ago. Such outside endeavours, such bodily exercises, such self-perform-

ances, such merely legal duties, without the least mention of Christ or his Spirit, are varnished over with swelling words of vanity, for the only means and expedients for the mortification of sin, as discover a deep-rooted unacquaintedness with the power of God and mystery of the gospel. The consideration hereof was one motive to the publishing of this plain discourse.

Now, the reasons why the Papists can never, with all their endeavours, truly mortify any one sin, amongst others, are,—

(1.) Because many of the ways and means they use and insist upon for this end were never appointed of God for that purpose. (Now, there is nothing in religion that hath any efficacy for compassing an end, but it hath it from God's appointment of it to that purpose.) Such as these are their rough garments, their vows, penances, disciplines, their course of monastical life, and the like; concerning all which God will say, "Who hath required these things at your hand?" and, "In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the traditions of men." Of the same nature are sundry self-vexations insisted on by others.

(2.) Because those things that are appointed of God as means are not used by them in their due place and order,—such as are praying, fasting, watching, meditation, and the like. These have their use in the business in hand; but whereas they are all to be looked on as streams, they look on them as the fountain. Whereas

they effect and accomplish the end as means only, subordinate to the Spirit and faith, they look on them to do it by virtue of the work wrought. If they fast so much, and pray so much, and keep their hours and times, the work is done. As the apostle says of some in another case, "They are always learning, never coming to the knowledge of the truth;" so they are always mortifying, but never come to any sound mortification. In a word, they have sundry means to mortify the natural man, as to the natural life here we lead; none to mortify lust or corruption.

This is the general mistake of men ignorant of the gospel about this thing; and it lies at the bottom of very much of that superstition and will-worship that hath been brought into the world. What horrible self-macerations were practised by some of the ancient authors of monastical devotion! what violence did they offer to nature! what extremity of sufferings did they put themselves upon! Search their ways and principles to the bottom, and you will find that it had no other root but this mistake, namely, that attempting rigid mortification, they fell upon the natural man instead of the corrupt old man,—upon the body wherein we live, instead of the body of death.

Neither will the natural Popery that is in others do it. Men are galled with the guilt of a sin that hath prevailed over them; they instantly promise to themselves and God that they will do so no more; they watch over

themselves, and pray for a season, until the heat waxes cold, and the sense of sin is worn off: and so mortification goes also, and sin returns to its former dominion. Duties are excellent food for a healthy soul; they are no physic for a sick soul. He that turns his meat into his medicine must expect no great operation. Spiritually sick men cannot sweat out their distemper with working. But this is the way of men who deceive their own souls; as we shall see afterward.

That none of these ways are sufficient is evident from the nature of the work itself that is to be done; it is a work that requires so many concurrent actings in it as no self-endeavour can reach unto, and is of that kind that an almighty energy is necessary for its accomplishment; as shall be afterwards manifested.

2. It is, then, the work of the Spirit. For,—

(1.) He is *promised* of God to be given unto us to do this work. The taking away of the stony heart,—that is, the stubborn, proud, rebellious, unbelieving heart,—is in general the work of mortification that we treat of. Now this is still promised to be done by the Spirit, Ezek. xi. 19, xxxvi. 26, “I will give my Spirit, and take away the stony heart;” and by the Spirit of God is this work wrought when all means fail, Isa. lvii. 17, 18.

(2.) We have all our mortification from the *gift* of Christ, and all the gifts of Christ are communicated to us and given us by the Spirit of Christ: “Without Christ we can do nothing,” John xv. 5. All communi-

cations of supplies and relief, in the beginnings, increasings, actings of any grace whatever, from him, are by the Spirit, by whom he alone works in and upon believers. From him we have our mortification: He is exalted and made a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto us, Acts v. 31; and of our repentance our mortification is no small portion. How doth he do it? Having "received the promise of the Holy Ghost," he sends him abroad for that end, Acts ii. 33. You know the manifold promises he made of sending the Spirit, as Tertullian speaks, "*Vicariam navare operam,*" to do the works that he had to accomplish in us.

The resolution of one or two questions will now lead me nearer to what I principally intend.

The first is, *How doth the Spirit mortify sin?*

I answer, in general, three ways:—

[1.] By causing our hearts to abound in *grace* and the fruits that are contrary to the flesh, and the fruits thereof and principles of them. So the apostle opposes the fruits of the flesh and of the Spirit: "The fruits of the flesh," says he, are so and so, Gal. v. 19–21; but, says he, the fruits of the Spirit are quite contrary, quite of another sort, verses 22, 23. Yea; but what if these are in us and do abound, may not the other abound also? No, says he, verse 24, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." But how? Why, verse 25, by living in the Spirit and walking after the Spirit;—that is, by the

abounding of the graces of the Spirit in us, and walking according to them. For, saith the apostle, "These are contrary one to another," verse 17; so that they cannot both be in the same subject, in any intense or high degree. This "renewing of us by the Holy Ghost," as it is called, Tit. iii. 5, is one great way of mortification; he causes us to grow, thrive, flourish, and abound in those graces which are contrary, opposite, and destructive to all the fruits of the flesh, and to the quiet or thriving of indwelling sin itself.

[2.] By a *real physical efficiency* on the root and habit of sin, for the weakening, destroying, and taking it away. Hence he is called a "Spirit of judgment and burning," Isa. iv. 4, really consuming and destroying our lusts. He takes away the stony heart by an almighty efficiency; for as he begins the work as to its kind, so he carries it on as to its degrees. He is the fire which burns up the very root of lust.

[3.] He brings the *cross of Christ* into the heart of a sinner by faith, and gives us communion with Christ in his death, and fellowship in his sufferings: of the manner whereof more afterward.

Secondly. If this be the work of the Spirit alone, how is it that we are exhorted to it?—seeing the Spirit of God only can do it, let the work be left wholly to him.

[1.] It is no otherwise the work of the Spirit but as all graces and good works which are in us are his. He "works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure,"

Phil. ii. 13; he works "all our works in us," Isa. xxvi. 12,—“the work of faith with power,” 2 Thess. i. 11, Col. ii. 12; he causes us to pray, and is a “Spirit of supplication,” Rom. viii. 26, Zech. xii. 10; and yet we are exhorted, and are to be exhorted, to all these.

[2.] He doth not so work our mortification in us as not to keep it still an act of our *obedience*. The Holy Ghost works in us and upon us, as we are fit to be wrought in and upon; that is, so as to preserve our own liberty and free obedience. He works upon our understandings, wills, consciences, and affections, agreeably to their own natures; he works *in us* and *with us*, not *against us* or *without us*; so that his assistance is an encouragement as to the facilitating of the work, and no occasion of neglect as to the work itself. And, indeed, I might here bewail the endless, foolish labour of poor souls, who, being convinced of sin, and not able to stand against the power of their convictions, do set themselves, by innumerable perplexing ways and duties, to keep down sin, but, being strangers to the Spirit of God, all in vain. They combat without victory, have war without peace, and are in slavery all their days. They spend their strength for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which profiteth not.

This is the saddest warfare that any poor creature can be engaged in. A soul under the power of conviction from the law is pressed to fight against sin, but hath no strength for the combat. They cannot but fight, and

they can never conquer; they are like men thrust on the sword of enemies on purpose to be slain. The *law* drives them on, and sin beats them back. Sometimes they think, indeed, that they have foiled sin, when they have only raised a dust that they see it not; that is, they distemper their natural affections of fear, sorrow, and anguish, which makes them believe that sin is conquered when it is not touched. By that time they are cold, they must to the battle again; and the lust which they thought to be slain appears to have no wound.

And if the case be so sad with them who do labour and strive, and yet enter not into the kingdom, what is their condition who despise all this; who are perpetually under the power and dominion of sin, and love to have it so; and are troubled at nothing, but that they cannot make sufficient provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof?

CHAPTER IV.

The last principle; of the usefulness of mortification—The vigour and comfort of our spiritual lives depend on our mortification—In what sense—Not absolutely and necessarily; Psa. lxxxviii., Heman's condition—Not as on the next and immediate cause—As a means; by removing of the contrary—The desperate effects of any unmortified lust; it weakens the soul, Psa. xxxviii. 3, 8, sundry ways, and darkens it—All graces improved by the mortification of sin—The best evidence of sincerity.

THE last principle I shall insist on (omitting, first, the necessity of mortification unto life, and, secondly, the certainty of life upon mortification) is,—

III. *That the life, vigour, and comfort of our spiritual life depend much on our mortification of sin.*

Strength and comfort, and power and peace, in our walking with God, are the things of our desires. Were any of us asked seriously, what it is that troubles us, we must refer it to one of these heads:—either we want strength or power, vigour and life, in our obedience, in our walking with God; or we want peace, comfort, and consolation therein. Whatever it is that may befall a believer that doth not belong to one of these two heads, doth not deserve to be mentioned in the days of our complaints.

Now, all these do much depend on a constant course of mortification, concerning which observe,—

1. I do not say they proceed from it, as though they were *necessarily* tied to it. A man may be carried on in a constant course of mortification all his days; and yet perhaps never enjoy a good day of peace and consolation. So it was with Heman, Psa. lxxxviii.; his life was a life of perpetual mortification and walking with God, yet terrors and wounds were his portion all his days. But God singled out Heman, a choice friend, to make him an example to them that afterward should be in distress. Canst thou complain if it be no otherwise with thee than it was with Heman, that eminent servant of God? and this shall be his praise to the end of the world. God makes it his prerogative to speak peace and consolation, Isa. lvii. 18, 19. "I will do that work," says God, "I will comfort him," verse 18. But how? By an immediate work of the new creation: "I create it," says God. The *use of means* for the obtaining of peace is ours; the *bestowing* of it is God's prerogative.

2. In the ways instituted by God, to give us life, vigour, courage, and consolation, mortification is not one of the immediate causes of it. They are the privileges of our adoption made known to our souls that give us immediately these things. "The Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God," giving us a new name and a white stone, adoption and justification,—that is, as to the sense and knowledge of them,—are the immediate cause (in the hand of the Spirit) of these things. But this I say,—

3. In our ordinary walking with God, and in an ordinary course of his dealing with us, the vigour and comfort of our spiritual lives depend much on our mortification, not only as a “*causa sine qua non*,” but as a thing that hath an effectual influence thereinto. For,—

(1.) This alone keeps sin from depriving us of the one and the other.

Every unmortified sin will certainly do two things:—

[1.] It will *weaken* the soul, and deprive it of its vigour.

[2.] It will *darken* the soul, and deprive it of its comfort and peace.

[1.] It *weakens* the soul, and deprives it of its strength. When David had for a while harboured an unmortified lust in his heart, it broke all his bones, and left him no spiritual strength; hence he complained that he was sick, weak, wounded, faint. “There is,” saith he, “no soundness in me,” Psa. xxxviii. 3; “I am feeble and sore broken,” verse 8; “yea, I cannot so much as look up,” Psa. xl. 12. An unmortified lust will drink up the spirit, and all the vigour of the soul, and weaken it for all duties. For,—

1st. It *untunes* and unframes the heart itself, by entangling its affections. It diverts the heart from that spiritual frame that is required for vigorous communion with God; it lays hold on the affections, rendering its object beloved and desirable, so expelling the love of the Father, 1 John ii. 15, iii. 17; so that the soul cannot say uprightly and truly to God, “Thou art my portion,”

having something else that it loves. Fear, desire, hope, which are the choice affections of the soul, that should be full of God, will be one way or other entangled with it.

2dly. It fills the *thoughts* with contrivances about it. Thoughts are the great purveyors of the soul to bring in provision to satisfy its affections; and if sin remain unmortified in the heart, they must ever and anon be making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. They must glaze, adorn, and dress the objects of the flesh, and bring them home to give satisfaction; and this they are able to do, in the service of a defiled imagination, beyond all expression.

3dly. It breaks out and actually hinders duty. The ambitious man must be studying, and the worldling must be working or contriving, and the sensual, vain person providing himself for vanity, when they should be engaged in the worship of God.

Were this my present business, to set forth the breaches, ruin, weakness, desolations, that one unmortified lust will bring upon a soul, this discourse must be extended much beyond my intendment.

[2.] As sin *weakens*, so it *darkens* the soul. It is a cloud, a thick cloud, that spreads itself over the face of the soul, and intercepts all the beams of God's love and favour. It takes away all sense of the privilege of our adoption; and if the soul begins to gather up thoughts of consolation, sin quickly scatters them: of which afterward.

Now, in this regard doth the vigour and power of our spiritual life depend on our mortification. It is the only means of the removal of that which will allow us neither the one nor the other. Men that are sick and wounded under the power of lust make many applications for help; they cry to God when the perplexity of their thoughts overwhelms them, even to God do they cry, but are not delivered; in vain do they use many remedies,—“they shall not be healed.” So, Hos. v. 13, “Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wounds,” and attempted sundry remedies: nothing will do until they come (verse 15) to “acknowledge their offence.” Men may see their sickness and wounds, but yet, if they make not due application, their cure will not be effected.

(2.) Mortification prunes all the graces of God, and makes room for them in our hearts to grow. The life and vigour of our spiritual lives consists in the vigour and flourishing of the plants of grace in our hearts. Now, as you may see in a garden, let there be a precious herb planted, and let the ground be untilled, and weeds grow about it, perhaps it will live still, but be a poor, withering, unuseful thing. You must look and search for it, and sometimes can scarce find it; and when you do, you can scarce know it, whether it be the plant you look for or no; and suppose it be, you can make no use of it at all. When, let another of the same kind be set in the ground, naturally as barren and bad as the other, but let it be well weeded, and everything that is

noxious and hurtful removed from it,—it flourishes and thrives; you may see it at first look into the garden, and have it for your use when you please. So it is with the graces of the Spirit that are planted in our hearts. That is true; they *are* still, they abide in a heart where there is some neglect of mortification; but they are ready to die, Rev. iii. 2, they are withering and decaying. The heart is like the sluggard's field,—so overgrown with weeds that you can scarce see the good corn. Such a man may search for faith, love, and zeal, and scarce be able to find any; and if he do discover that these graces are there yet, alive and sincere, yet they are so weak, so clogged with lusts, that they are of very little use; they remain, indeed, but are ready to die. But now let the heart be cleansed by mortification, the weeds of lust constantly and daily rooted up (as they spring daily, nature being their proper soil), let room be made for grace to thrive and flourish,—how will every grace act its part, and be ready for every use and purpose!

(3.) As to our peace; as there is nothing that hath any evidence of sincerity without it, so I know nothing that hath such an evidence of sincerity in it;—which is no small foundation of our peace. Mortification is the soul's vigorous opposition to self, wherein sincerity is most evident.

CHAPTER V.

The principal intendment of the whole discourse proposed—The first main case of conscience stated—What it is to mortify any sin, negatively considered—Not the utter destruction of it in this life—Not the dissimulation of it—Not the improvement of any natural principle—Not the diversion of it—Not an occasional conquest—Occasional conquests of sin, what and when; upon the eruption of sin; in time of danger or trouble.

THESE things being premised, I come to my principal intention, of handling some questions or practical cases that present themselves in this business of mortification of sin in believers.

The first, which is the head of all the rest, and whereunto they are reduced, may be considered as lying under the ensuing proposal:—

Suppose a man to be a true believer, and yet finds in himself a powerful indwelling sin, leading him captive to the law of it, consuming his heart with trouble, perplexing his thoughts, weakening his soul as to duties of communion with God, disquieting him as to peace, and perhaps defiling his conscience, and exposing him to hardening through the deceitfulness of sin,—what shall he do? what course shall he take and insist on for the mortification of this sin, lust, distemper, or corruption,

to such a degree as that, though it be not utterly destroyed, yet, in his contest with it, he may be enabled to keep up power, strength, and peace in communion with God?

In answer to this important inquiry, I shall do these things:—

I. Show what it is to mortify any sin, and that both negatively and positively, that we be not mistaken in the foundation.

II. Give general directions for such things as without which it will be utterly impossible for any one to get any sin truly and spiritually mortified.

III. Draw out the particulars whereby this is to be done; in the whole carrying on this consideration, that it is not of the doctrine of mortification in general, but only in reference to the particular case before proposed, that I am treating.

I. 1. (1.) To mortify a sin is not utterly to *kill*, root it out, and destroy it, that it should have no more hold at all nor residence in our hearts. It is true this is that which is aimed at; but this is not in this life to be accomplished. There is no man that truly sets himself to mortify any sin, but he aims at, intends, desires its utter destruction, that it should leave neither root nor fruit in the heart or life. He would so kill it that it should never move nor stir any more, cry or call, seduce or tempt, to eternity. Its *not-being* is the thing aimed at. Now, though doubtless there may, by the Spirit and

grace of Christ, a wonderful success and eminency of victory against any sin be attained, so that a man may have almost constant triumph over it, yet an utter killing and destruction of it, that it should not be, is not in this life to be expected. This Paul assures us of, Phil. iii. 12, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." He was a *choice saint*, a pattern for believers, who, in faith and love, and all the fruits of the Spirit, had not his fellow in the world, and on that account ascribes perfection to himself in comparison of others, verse 15; yet he had not "attained," he was not "perfect," but was "following after:" still a vile body he had, and we have, that must be changed by the great power of Christ at last, verse 21. This we would have; but God sees it best for us that we should be complete in nothing in ourselves, that in all things we might be "complete in Christ;" which is best for us, Col. ii. 10.

(2.) I think I need not say it is not the *dissimulation* of a sin. When a man on some outward respects forsakes the practice of any sin, men perhaps may look on him as a changed man. God knows that to his former iniquity he hath added cursed hypocrisy, and is got in a safer path to hell than he was in before. He hath got another heart than he had, that is more cunning; not a new heart, that is more holy.

(3.) The mortification of sin consists not in the improvement of a *quiet, sedate* nature. Some men have an advantage by their natural constitution so far as that

they are not exposed to such violence of unruly passions and tumultuous affections as many others are. Let now these men cultivate and improve their natural frame and temper by discipline, consideration, and prudence, and they may seem to themselves and others very mortified men, when, perhaps, their hearts are a standing sink of all abominations. Some man is never so much troubled all his life, perhaps, with anger and passion, nor doth trouble others, as another is almost every day; and yet the latter hath done more to the mortification of the sin than the former. Let not such persons try their mortification by such things as their natural temper gives no life or vigour to. Let them bring themselves to self-denial of unbelief, envy, or some such spiritual sin, and they will have a better view of themselves.

(4.) A sin is not mortified when it is only diverted. Simon Magus for a season left his *sorceries*; but his *covetousness and ambition*, that set him on work, remained still, and would have been acting another way. Therefore Peter tells him, "I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness;"—"Notwithstanding the profession thou hast made, notwithstanding thy relinquishment of thy sorceries, thy lust is as powerful as ever in thee; the same lust, only the streams of it are diverted. It now exerts and puts forth itself another way, but it is the old gall of bitterness still." A man may be sensible of a lust, set himself against the eruptions of it, take care that it shall not break forth as it has done, but in the

meantime suffer the same corrupted habit to vent itself some other way; as he who heals and skins a running sore thinks himself cured, but in the meantime his flesh festereth by the corruption of the same humour, and breaks out in another place. And this diversion, with the alterations that attend it, often befalls men on accounts wholly foreign unto grace: change of the course of life that a man was in, of relations, interests, designs, may effect it; yea, the very alterations in men's constitutions, occasioned by a natural progress in the course of their lives, may produce such changes as these. Men in age do not usually persist in the pursuit of youthful lusts, although they have never mortified any one of them. And the same is the case of bartering of lusts, and leaving to serve one that a man may serve another. He that changes pride for worldliness, sensuality for Pharisaism, vanity in himself to the contempt of others, let him not think that he hath mortified the sin that he seems to have left. He hath changed his master, but is a servant still.

(5.) *Occasional conquests* of sin do not amount to a mortifying of it.

There are two occasions or seasons wherein a man who is contending with any sin may seem to himself to have mortified it:—

[1.] When it hath had some sad *eruption*, to the disturbance of his peace, terror of his conscience, dread of scandal, and evident provocation of God. This awakens

and stirs up all that is in the man, and amazes him, fills him with an abhorrency of sin, and himself for it; sends him to God, makes him cry out as for life, to abhor his lust as hell, and to set himself against it. The whole man, spiritual and natural, being now awaked, sin shrinks in its head, appears not, but lies as dead before him: as when one that hath drawn nigh to an army in the night, and hath killed a principal person, —instantly the guards awake, men are roused up, and strict inquiry is made after the enemy, who, in the meantime, until the noise and tumult be over, hides himself, or lies like one that is dead, yet with firm resolution to do the like mischief again upon the like opportunity. Upon the sin among the Corinthians, see how they muster up themselves for the surprisal and destruction of it, 2 Cor. chap. vii. 11. So it is in a person when a breach hath been made upon his conscience, quiet, perhaps credit, by his lust, in some eruption of actual sin;—carefulness, indignation, desire, fear, revenge, are all set on work about it and against it, and lust is quiet for a season, being run down before them; but when the hurry is over and the inquest past, the thief appears again alive, and is as busy as ever at his work.

[2.] In a time of some *judgment*, calamity, or pressing affliction; the heart is taken up with thoughts and contrivances of flying from the present troubles, fears, and dangers. This, as a convinced person concludes, is to be done only by relinquishment of sin, which gains

peace with God. It is the anger of God in every affliction that galls a convinced person. To be quit of this, men resolve at such times against their sins. Sin shall never more have any place in them; they will never again give up themselves to the service of it. Accordingly, sin is quiet, stirs not, seems to be mortified; not, indeed, that it hath received any one wound, but merely because the soul hath possessed its faculties, whereby it should exert itself, with thoughts inconsistent with the motions thereof; which, when they are laid aside, sin returns again to its former life and vigour. So they (Psa. lxxviii. 32-37), are a full instance and description of this frame of spirit whereof I speak: "For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." I no way doubt but that when they sought, and returned, and inquired early after God, they did it with full purpose of heart as to the relinquishment of their sins; it is expressed in the word "returned." To turn or return to the Lord is by a relinquishment of sin. This they did "early,"—with earnestness and diligence; but yet their sin was

unmortified for all this, verses 36, 37. And this is the state of many humiliations in the days of affliction, and a great deceit in the hearts of believers themselves lies oftentimes herein.

These and many other ways there are whereby poor souls deceive themselves, and suppose they have mortified their lusts, when they live and are mighty, and on every occasion break forth, to their disturbance and disquietness.

CHAPTER VI.

The mortification of sin in particular described—The several parts and degrees thereof—The habitual weakening of its root and principle—The power of lust to tempt—Differences of that power as to persons and times—Constant fighting against sin—The parts thereof considered—Success against it—The sum of this discourse considered.

WHAT it is to mortify a sin in general, which will make further way for particular directions, is next to be considered.

2. The mortification of a lust consists in three things:—

(1.) An *habitual* weakening of it. Every lust is a depraved habit or disposition, continually inclining the heart to evil. Thence is that description of him who hath no lust truly mortified, Gen. vi. 5, “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.” He is always under the power of a strong bent and inclination to sin. And the reason why a natural man is not always perpetually in the pursuit of some one lust, night and day, is because he hath many to serve, every one crying to be satisfied; thence he is carried on with great variety, but still in general he lies towards the satisfaction of self.

We will suppose, then, the lust or distemper whose

mortification is inquired after to be in itself a strong, deeply-rooted, habitual inclination and bent of will and affections unto some actual sin, as to the matter of it, though not, under that formal consideration, always stirring up imaginations, thoughts, and contrivances about the object of it. Hence, men are said to have their "hearts set upon evil," the bent of their spirits lies towards it, to make "provision for the flesh."* And a sinful, depraved habit, as in many other things, so in this, differs from all natural or moral habits whatever: for whereas they incline the soul gently and suitably to itself, sinful habits impel with violence and impetuosity; whence lusts are said to fight or wage "war against the soul,"† 1 Pet. ii. 11,—to rebel or rise up in war with that conduct and opposition which is usual therein,‡ Rom. vii. 23,—to lead captive, or effectually captivating upon success in battle,—all works of great violence and impetuosity.

I might manifest fully, from that description we have of it, Rom. vii., how it will darken the mind, extinguish convictions, dethrone reason, interrupt the power and influence of any considerations that may be brought to hamper it, and break through all into a flame. But this is not my present business. Now, the first thing in mortification is the weakening of this habit of sin or lust, that it shall not, with that violence, earnestness, fre-

* Rom. xiii. 14.

† Στρατεύονται κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς.

‡ Ἀντιστρατεύμενον, αἰχμαλωτίζοντα.

quency, rise up, conceive, tumultuate, provoke, entice, disquiet, as naturally it is apt to do, James i. 14, 15.

I shall desire to give one caution or rule by the way, and it is this : Though every lust doth in its own nature equally, universally, incline and impel to sin, yet this must be granted with these two limitations :—

[1.] *One lust*, or a lust in one man, may receive many accidental improvements, heightenings, and strengthenings, which may give it life, power, and vigour, exceedingly above what another lust hath, or the same lust (that is, of the same kind and nature) in another man. When a lust falls in with the natural constitutions and temper, with a suitable course of life, with occasions, or when Satan hath got a fit handle to it to manage it, as he hath a thousand ways so to do, that lust grows violent and impetuous above others, or more than the same lust in another man ; then the steams of it darken the mind so, that though a man knows the same things as formerly, yet they have no power nor influence on the will, but corrupt affections and passions are set by it at liberty.

But especially, lust gets strength by *temptation*. When a suitable temptation falls in with a lust, it gives it a new life, vigour, power, violence, and rage, which it seemed not before to have or to be capable of. Instances to this purpose might be multiplied ; but it is the design of some part of another treatise to evince this observation.

[2.] Some lusts are far more sensible and discernible in their violent actings than others. Paul puts a differ-

ence between uncleanness and all other sins: 1 Cor. vi. 18, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." Hence, the motions of that sin are more sensible, more discernible than of others; when perhaps the love of the world, or the like, is in a person no less habitually predominant than that, yet it makes not so great a combustion in the whole man.

And on this account some men may go in their own thoughts and in the eyes of the world for mortified men, who yet have in them no less predominancy of lust than those who cry out with astonishment upon the account of its perplexing tumultuatings, yea, than those who have by the power of it been hurried into scandalous sins; only their lusts are in and about things which raise not such a tumult in the soul, about which they are exercised with a calmer frame of spirit, the very fabric of nature being not so nearly concerned in them as in some other.

I say, then, that the first thing in mortification is the *weakening* of this habit, that it shall not impel and tumultuate as formerly; that it shall not entice and draw aside; that it shall not disquiet and perplex the killing of its life, vigour, promptness, and readiness to be stirring. This is called "crucifying the flesh with the lusts thereof," Gal. v. 24; that is, taking away its blood and spirits that give it strength and power,—the wasting of the body of death "day by day," 2 Cor. iv. 16.

As a man *nailed to the cross*, he first struggles, and strives, and cries out with great strength and might, but, as his blood and spirits waste, his strivings are faint and seldom, his cries low and hoarse, scarce to be heard;—when a man first sets on a lust or distemper, to deal with it, it struggles with great violence to break loose; it cries with earnestness and impatience to be satisfied and relieved; but when by mortification the blood and spirits of it are let out, it moves seldom and faintly, cries sparingly, and is scarce heard in the heart; it may have sometimes a dying pang, that makes an appearance of great vigour and strength, but it is quickly over, especially if it be kept from considerable success. This the apostle describes, as in the whole chapter, so especially, Rom. vi. 6.

“Sin,” saith he, “is crucified;” it is fastened to the cross. To what end? “That the body of death may be destroyed,” the power of sin weakened and abolished by little and little, that “henceforth we should not serve sin;” that is, that sin might not incline, impel us with such efficacy as to make us servants to it, as it hath done heretofore. And this is spoken not only with respect to carnal and sensual affections, or desires of worldly things,—not only in respect of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,—but also as to the flesh, that is, in the mind and will, in that opposition unto God which is in us by nature. Of what nature soever the troubling distemper be, by what ways soever it

make itself out, either by impelling to evil or hindering from that which is good, the rule is the same; and unless this be done effectually, all after-contention will not compass the end aimed at. A man may beat down the bitter fruit from an evil tree until he is weary; whilst the root abides in strength and vigour, the beating down of the present fruit will not hinder it from bringing forth more. This is the folly of some men; they set themselves with all earnestness and diligence against the appearing eruption of lust, but, leaving the principle and root untouched, perhaps unsearched out, they make but little or no progress in this work of mortification.

(2.) In constant *fighting* and *contending* against sin. To be able always to be laying load on sin is no small degree of mortification. When sin is strong and vigorous, the soul is scarce able to make any head against it; it sighs, and groans, and mourns, and is troubled, as David speaks of himself, but seldom has sin in the pursuit. David complains that his sin had "taken fast hold upon him, that he could not look up," Psa. xl. 12. How little, then, was he able to fight against it! Now, sundry things are required unto and comprised in this fighting against sin:—

[1.] To *know* that a man hath such an enemy to deal withal, to take notice of it, to consider it as an enemy indeed, and one that is to be destroyed by all means possible, is required hereunto. As I said before, the contest is vigorous and hazardous,—it is about the things

of eternity. When, therefore, men have slight and transient thoughts of their lusts, it is no great sign that they are mortified, or that they are in a way for their mortification. This is every man's "knowing the plague of his own heart," 1 Kings viii. 38, without which no other work can be done. It is to be feared that very many have little knowledge of the main enemy that they carry about with them in their bosoms. This makes them ready to justify themselves, and to be impatient of reproof or admonition, not knowing that they are in any danger, 2 Chron. xvi. 10.

[2.] To labour to be acquainted with the ways, wiles, methods, advantages, and occasions of its *success*, is the beginning of this warfare. So do men deal with enemies. They inquire out their counsels and designs, ponder their ends, consider how and by what means they have formerly prevailed, that they may be prevented. In this consists the greatest skill and conduct. Take this away, and all waging of war, wherein is the greatest improvement of human wisdom and industry, would be brutish. So do they deal with lust who mortify it indeed. Not only when it is actually vexing, enticing, and seducing, but in their retirements they consider, "This is our enemy; this is his way and progress, these are his advantages, thus hath he prevailed, and thus he will do, if not prevented." So David, "My sin is ever before me," Psa. li. 3. And, indeed, one of the choicest and most eminent parts of practically spiritual wisdom consists in

finding out the subtilties, policies, and depths of any indwelling sin; to consider and know wherein its greatest strength lies,—what advantage it uses to make of occasions, opportunities, temptations,—what are its pleas, pretences, reasonings,—what its stratagems, colours, excuses; to set the wisdom of the Spirit against the craft of the *old man*; to trace this serpent in all its turnings and windings; to be able to say, at its most secret and (to a common frame of heart) imperceptible actings, “This is your old way and course; I know what you aim at;”—and so to be always in readiness is a good part of our warfare.

[3.] To load it daily with all the things which shall after be mentioned, that are grievous, killing, and destructive to it, is the height of this contest. Such a one never thinks his lust dead because it is quiet, but labours still to give it new wounds, new blows every day. So the apostle, Col. iii. 5.

Now, whilst the soul is in this condition, whilst it is thus dealing, it is certainly uppermost; sin is under the sword and *dying*.

(3.) In *success*. Frequent success against any lust is another part and evidence of mortification. By success I understand not a mere disappointment of sin, that it be not brought forth nor accomplished, but a victory over it, and pursuit of it to a complete conquest. For instance, when the heart finds sin at any time at work, seducing, forming imaginations to make provision for the

flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, it instantly apprehends sin, and brings it to the law of God and love of Christ, condemns it, follows it with execution to the uttermost.

Now, I say, when a man comes to this state and condition, that lust is weakened in the root and principle, that its motions and actions are fewer and weaker than formerly, so that they are not able to hinder his duty nor interrupt his peace,—when he can, in a quiet, sedate frame of spirit, find out and fight against sin, and have success against it,—then sin is mortified in some considerable measure, and, notwithstanding all its opposition, a man may have peace with God all his days.

Unto these heads, then, do I refer the mortification aimed at; that is, of any one perplexing distemper, whereby the general pravity and corruption of our nature attempts to exert and put forth itself:—

First, The *weakening* of its indwelling disposition, whereby it inclines, entices, impels to evil, rebels, opposes, fights against God, by the implanting, habitual residence, and cherishing of a principle of grace that stands in direct opposition to it and is destructive of it, is the foundation of it. So, by the implanting and growth of humility is pride weakened, passion by patience, uncleanness by purity of mind and conscience, love of this world by heavenly-mindedness: which are graces of the Spirit, or the same habitual grace variously acting itself by the Holy Ghost, according to the variety or diversity of the objects about which it is exercised; as the other

are several lusts, or the same natural corruption variously acting itself, according to the various advantages and occasions that it meets withal.—The *promptness, alacrity, vigour* of the Spirit, or new man, in contending with, cheerful fighting against, the lust spoken of, by all the ways and with all the means that are appointed thereunto, constantly using the succours provided against its motions and actings, is a second thing hereunto required.—Success unto *several degrees* attends these two. Now this, if the distemper hath not an unconquerable advantage from its natural situation, may possibly be to such a *universal* conquest, as the soul may never more sensibly feel its opposition, and shall, however, assuredly arise to an allowance of peace to the conscience, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace.

CHAPTER VII.

General rules, without which no lust will be mortified—No mortification unless a man be a believer—Dangers of attempting mortification of sin by unregenerate persons—The duty of unconverted persons as to this business of mortification considered—The vanity of the Papists' attempts and rules for mortification thence discovered.

II. THE *ways* and *means* whereby a soul may proceed to the mortification of any particular lust and sin, which Satan takes advantage by to disquiet and weaken him, come next under consideration.

Now, there are some general considerations to be premised, concerning some principles and foundations of this work, without which no man in the world, be he never so much raised by convictions, and resolved for the mortification of any sin, can attain thereunto.

General rules and principles, without which no sin will be ever mortified, are these:—

1. *Unless a man be a believer,—that is, one that is truly ingrafted into Christ,—he can never mortify any one sin*; I do not say, unless he know himself to be so, but unless indeed he be so.

Mortification is the work of believers: Rom. viii. 13, "If ye through the Spirit," etc,—ye *believers*, to whom

there is no condemnation, verse 1. They alone are exhorted to it: Col. iii. 5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." Who should mortify? You who "are risen with Christ," verse 1; whose "life is hid with Christ in God," verse 3; who "shall appear with him in glory," verse 4. An unregenerate man may do something like it; but the work itself, so as it may be acceptable with God, he can never perform. You know what a picture of it is drawn in some of the philosophers,—Seneca, Tully, Epictetus; what affectionate discourses they have of contempt of the world and self, of regulating and conquering all exorbitant affections and passions! The lives of most of them manifested that their maxims differed as much from true mortification as the sun painted on a sign-post from the sun in the firmament; they had neither light nor heat. Their own Lucian sufficiently manifests what they all were. There is no death of sin without the death of Christ. You know what attempts there are made after it by the Papists, in their vows, penances, and satisfactions. I dare say of them (I mean as many of them as act upon the principles of their church, as they call it) what Paul says of Israel in point of righteousness, Rom. ix. 31, 32,—They have followed after mortification, but they have not attained to it. Wherefore? "Because they seek it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." The same is the state and condition of all amongst ourselves who, in obedience to their convictions and awakened consciences, do attempt

a relinquishment of sin;—they follow after it, but they do not attain it.

It is true, it *is*, it *will be*, required of every person whatever that hears the law or gospel preached, that he mortify sin. It is his *duty*, but it is not his *immediate duty*; it is his duty to do it, but to do it in God's way. If you require your servant to pay so much money for you in such a place, but first to go and take it up in another, it is his duty to pay the money appointed, and you will blame him if he do it not; yet it was not his immediate duty,—he was first to take it up, according to your direction. So it is in this case: sin is to be mortified, but something is to be done in the first place to enable us thereunto.

I have proved that it is the Spirit alone that can mortify sin; he is promised to do it, and all other means without him are empty and vain. How shall he, then, mortify sin that hath not the Spirit? A man may easier see without eyes, speak without a tongue, than truly mortify one sin without the Spirit. Now, how is he attained? It is the Spirit of Christ: and as the apostle says, "If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his," Rom. viii. 9; so, if we are Christ's, have an interest in him, we have the Spirit, and so alone have power for mortification. This the apostle discourses at large, Rom. viii. 8, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." It is the inference and conclusion he makes of his foregoing discourse about our natural

state and condition, and the enmity we have unto God and his law therein. If we are in the flesh, if we have not the Spirit, we cannot do any thing that should please God. But what is our deliverance from this condition? Verse 9, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you;"—"Ye believers, that have the Spirit of Christ, ye are not in the flesh." There is no way of deliverance from the state and condition of being in the flesh but by the Spirit of Christ. And what if this Spirit of Christ be in you? Why, then, you are mortified; verse 10, "The body is dead because of sin," or unto it; mortification is carried on; the new man is quickened to righteousness. This the apostle proves, verse 11, from the union we have with Christ by the Spirit, which will produce suitable operations in us to what it wrought in him. All attempts, then, for mortification of any lust, without an interest in Christ, are vain. Many men that are galled with and for sin, the arrows of Christ for conviction, by the preaching of the word, or some affliction having been made sharp in their hearts, do vigorously set themselves against this or that particular lust, wherewith their consciences have been most disquieted or perplexed. But, poor creatures! they labour in the fire, and their work consumeth. When the Spirit of Christ comes to this work he will be "like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap," and he will purge men as gold and as silver, Mal. iii. 2, 3,—take away their dross and tin, their filth and blood,

as Isa. iv. 4; but men must be gold and silver in the bottom, or else refining will do them no good. The prophet gives us the sad issue of wicked men's utmost attempts for mortification, by what means soever that God affords them: Jer. vi. 29, 30, "The bellows are burned, and the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them." And what is the reason hereof? Verse 28, They were "brass and iron" when they were put into the furnace. Men may refine brass and iron long enough before they will be good silver.

I say, then, mortification is not the *present* business of *unregenerate* men. God calls them not to it as yet; *conversion* is their work,—the conversion of the *whole* soul,—not the mortification of *this* or *that particular* lust. You would laugh at a man that you should see setting up a great fabric, and never take any care for a foundation; especially if you should see him so foolish as that, having a thousand experiences that what he built one day fell down another, he would yet continue in the same course. So it is with convinced persons; though they plainly see, that what ground they get against sin one day they lose another, yet they will go on in the same road still, without inquiring where the destructive flaw in their progress lies. When the Jews, upon the conviction of their sin, were cut to the heart, Acts ii. 37, and cried out, "What shall we do?" what doth Peter direct them to do? Does

he bid them go and mortify their pride, wrath, malice, cruelty, and the like? No; he knew that was not their present work, but he calls them to conversion and faith in Christ in general, verse 38. Let the soul be first thoroughly converted, and then, "looking on Him whom they had pierced," humiliation and mortification will ensue. Thus, when John came to preach repentance and conversion, he said, "The axe is now laid to the root of the tree," Matt. iii. 10. The Pharisees had been laying heavy burdens, imposing tedious duties, and rigid means of mortification, in fastings, washings, and the like, all in vain. Says John, "The doctrine of conversion is for you; the axe in my hand is laid to the root." And our Saviour tells us what is to be done in this case; says he, "Do men gather grapes from thorns?" Matt. vii. 16. But suppose a thorn be well pruned and cut, and have pains taken with him? "Yea, but he will never bear figs," verses 17, 18; it cannot be but every tree will bring forth fruit according to its own kind. What is then to be done, he tells us, Matt. xii. 33, "Make the tree good, and his fruit will be good." The root must be dealt with, the nature of the tree changed, or no good fruit will be brought forth.

This is that I aim at: unless a man be *regenerate*, unless he be a believer, all attempts that he can make for mortification, be they never so specious and promising,—all means he can use, let him follow them with never so much diligence, earnestness, watchfulness, and intention

of mind and spirit,—are to no purpose. In vain shall he use many remedies; he shall not be healed. Yea, there are sundry desperate evils attending an endeavour in convinced persons, that are no more but so, to perform this duty:—

(1.) The mind and soul is taken up about that which is not the man's *proper business*, and so he is diverted from that which is so. God lays hold by his word and judgments on some sin in him, galls his conscience, disquiets his heart, deprives him of his rest; now other diversions will not serve his turn; he must apply himself to the work before him. The business in hand being to awake the whole man unto a consideration of the state and condition wherein he is, that he might be brought home to God, instead hereof he sets himself to mortify the sin that galls him,—which is a pure issue of self-love, to be freed from his trouble, and not at all to the work he is called unto,—and so is diverted from it. Thus God tells us of Ephraim, when he “spread his net upon them, and brought them down as the fowls of heaven, and chastised them,” Hos. vii. 12, caught them, entangled them, convinced them that they could not escape; saith he of them, “They return, but not to the Most High;”—they set themselves to a relinquishment of sin, but not in that manner, by *universal conversion*, as God called for it. Thus are men diverted from coming unto God by the most glorious ways that they can fix upon to come to him by. And this is one of the most common deceits

whereby men ruin their own souls. I wish that some whose trade is to daub with untempered mortar in the things of God did not teach this deceit, and cause the people to err by their ignorance. What do men do, what oftentimes are they directed unto, when their consciences are galled by sin and disquietment from the Lord, who hath laid hold upon them? Is not a relinquishment of the sin, as to practice, that they are, in some fruits of it, perplexed withal, and making head against it, the sum of what they apply themselves unto? and is not the gospel end of their convictions lost thereby? Here men abide and perish.

(2.) This duty being a thing good in itself, in its proper place, a duty evidencing sincerity, bringing home peace to the conscience; a man finding himself really engaged in it, his mind and heart set against this or that sin, with purpose and resolution to have no more to do with it,—he is ready to conclude that his state and condition is good, and so to delude his own soul. For,—

[1.] When his conscience hath been made sick with sin, and he could find no rest, when he should go to the great Physician of souls, and get healing in his blood, the man by this engagement against sin pacifies and quiets his conscience, and sits down without going to Christ at all. Ah! how many poor souls are thus *de-luded* to eternity! “When Ephraim saw his sickness, he sent to king Jareb,” Hos. v. 13; which kept him off from God. The whole bundle of the popish religion is

made up of designs and contrivances to pacify conscience without Christ; all described by the apostle, Rom. x. 3.

[2.] By this means men *satisfy* themselves that their state and condition is good, seeing they do that which is a work good in itself, and they do not do it to be seen. They know they would have the work done in sincerity, and so are hardened in a kind of self-righteousness.

(3.) When a man hath thus for a season been deluded, and hath deceived his own soul, and finds in *a long course* of life that indeed his sin is *not mortified*, or if he hath changed one he hath gotten another, he begins at length to think that all contending is in vain,—he shall never be able to prevail; he is making a dam against water that increaseth on him. Hereupon *he gives over*, as one despairing of any success, and yields up himself to the power of sin and that habit of formality that he hath gotten.

And this is the usual issue with persons attempting the mortification of sin without an interest in Christ first obtained. It *deludes* them, *hardens* them, — *destroys* them. And therefore we see that there are not usually more vile and desperate sinners in the world than such as, having by conviction been put on this course, have found it fruitless, and deserted it without a discovery of Christ. And this is the substance of the religion and godliness of the choicest formalists in the world, and of all those who in the Roman synagogue are drawn to mortification, as they drive Indians to baptism or cattle

to water. I say, then, that mortification is the work of believers, and believers only. To kill sin is the work of living men; where men are *dead* (as all unbelievers, the best of them, are dead), sin is *alive*, and will live.

2. It is the work of *faith*, the *peculiar* work of faith. Now, if there be a work to be done that will be effected by one only instrument, it is the greatest madness for any to attempt the doing of it that hath not that instrument. Now, it is faith that purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9; or, as Peter speaks, we “purify our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit,” 1 Pet. i. 22; and without it, it will not be done.

What hath been spoken I suppose is sufficient to make good my first *general rule*;—*Be sure to get an interest in Christ; if you intend to mortify any sin without it, it will never be done.*

Obj. You will say, “What, then, would you have unregenerate men that are convinced of the evil of sin do? Shall they cease striving against sin, live dissolutely, give their lusts their swing, and be as bad as the worst of men? This were a way to set the whole world into confusion, to bring all things into darkness, to set open the flood-gates of lust, and lay the reins upon the necks of men to rush into all sin with delight and greediness, like the horse into the battle.”

Ans. 1. God forbid! It is to be looked on as a great issue of the wisdom, goodness, and love of God, that by manifold ways and means he is pleased to restrain the

sons of men from running forth into that compass of excess and riot which the depravedness of their nature would carry them out unto with violence. By what way soever this is done, it is an issue of the care, kindness, and goodness of God, without which the whole earth would be a hell of sin and confusion.

2. There is a peculiar *convincing* power in the word, which God is oftentimes pleased to put forth, to the wounding, amazing, and, in some sort, humbling of sinners, though they are never converted. And the word is to be preached though it hath this end, yet not with this end. Let, then, the word be preached, and the sins of men [will be] rebuked, lust will be restrained, and some oppositions will be made against sin; though that be not the effect aimed at.

3. Though this be the *work* of the word and Spirit, and it be good in itself, yet it is not profitable nor available as to the main end in them in whom it is wrought; they are still in the gall of bitterness, and under the power of darkness.

4. Let men know it is their *duty*, but in its proper place; I take not men from mortification, but put them upon conversion. He that shall call a man from mending a hole in the wall of his house, to quench a fire that is consuming the whole building, is not his enemy. Poor soul! it is not thy sore finger but thy hectic fever that thou art to apply thyself to the consideration of. Thou

settest thyself against a *particular* sin, and dost not consider that thou art *nothing* but sin.

Let me add this to them who are preachers of the word, or intend, through the good hand of God, that employment. It is their duty to plead with men about their sins, to lay loads on particular sins, but always remember that it be done with that which is the proper end of law and gospel;—that is, they make use of the sin they speak against to the discovery of the state and condition wherein the sinner is; otherwise, haply, they may work men to formality and hypocrisy, but little of the true end of preaching the gospel will be brought about. It will not avail to beat a man off from his drunkenness into a sober formality. A skilful master of the assemblies lays his axe at the root, drives still at the heart. To inveigh against particular sins of ignorant, unregenerate persons, such as the land is full of, is a good work; but yet, though it may be done with great efficacy, vigour, and success, if this be all the effect of it, that they are set upon the most sedulous endeavours of mortifying their sins preached down, all that is done is but like the beating of an enemy in an open field, and driving him into an impregnable castle, not to be prevailed against. Get you at any time a sinner at the advantage, on the account of any one sin whatever? have you any thing to take hold of him by?—bring it to his state and condition, drive it up to the head, and there deal with him. To break men off particular sins, and not to break their

hearts, is to deprive ourselves of advantages of dealing with them.

And herein is the Roman mortification grievously peccant; they drive all sorts of persons to it, without the least consideration whether they have a principle for it or no. Yea, they are so far from calling on men to believe, that they may be able to mortify their lusts, that they call men to mortification instead of believing. The truth is, they neither know what it is to *believe*, nor what *mortification* itself intends. Faith with them is but a general assent to the doctrine taught in their church; and mortification the betaking of a man by a vow to some certain course of life, wherein he denies himself something of the use of the things of this world, not without a considerable compensation. Such men know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. Their boasting of their mortification is but their glorying in their shame. Some casuists among ourselves, who, overlooking the necessity of regeneration, do avowedly give this for a direction to all sorts of persons that complain of any sin or lust, that they should vow against it, at least for a season, a month or so, seem to have a scantling of light in the mystery of the gospel, much like that of Nicodemus when he came first to Christ. They bid men vow to abstain from their sin for a season. This commonly makes their lust more impetuous. Perhaps with great perplexity they keep their word; perhaps not, which increases their guilt and torment. Is their sin at all mor-

tified hereby? Do they find a conquest over it? Is their condition changed, though they attain a relinquishment of it? Are they not still in the gall of bitterness? Is not this to put men to make brick, if not without *straw*, yet, which is worse, without *strength*? What promise hath any unregenerate man to countenance him in this work? what assistance for the performance of it? Can sin be killed without an interest in the death of Christ, or mortified without the Spirit? If such directions should prevail to change men's lives, as seldom they do, yet they never reach to the change of their hearts or conditions. They may make men self-justiciaries or hypocrites, not Christians. It grieves me oftentimes to see poor souls, that have a zeal for God and a desire of eternal welfare, kept by such directors and directions under a hard, burdensome, outside worship and service of God, with many specious endeavours for mortification, in an utter ignorance of the righteousness of Christ, and unacquaintance with his Spirit all their days. Persons and things of this kind I know too many. If ever God shine into their hearts, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of his Son Jesus Christ, they will see the folly of their present way.

CHAPTER VIII.

The second general rule proposed—Without universal sincerity for the mortifying of every lust, no lust will be mortified—Partial mortification always from a corrupt principle—Perplexity of temptation from a lust oftentimes a chastening for other negligences.

2. THE second principle which to this purpose I shall propose is this :—

Without sincerity and diligence in a universality of obedience, there is no mortification of any one perplexing lust to be obtained.

The other was to the person ; this to the thing itself. I shall a little explain this position.

A man finds any lust to bring him into the condition formerly described ; it is powerful, strong, tumultuating, leads captive, vexes, disquiets, takes away peace ; he is not able to bear it ; wherefore he sets himself against it, groans under it, sighs to be delivered : but in the meantime, perhaps, in other duties,—in constant communion with God,—in reading, prayer, and meditation,—in other ways that are not of the same kind with the lust where-with he is troubled,—he is loose and negligent. Let not that man think that ever he shall arrive to the mortification of the lust he is perplexed withal. This is a condi-

tion that not seldom befalls men in their pilgrimage. The Israelites, under a sense of their sin, drew nigh to God with much diligence and earnestness, with fasting and prayer, Isa. lviii.: many expressions are made of their earnestness in the work, verse 2, "They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God." But God rejects all. Their fast is a remedy that will not heal them, and the reason given of it, verses 5-7, is, because they were particular in this duty—they attended diligently to that, but in others were negligent and careless. He that hath a "running sore" (it is the Scripture expression) upon him, arising from an ill habit of body, contracted by intemperance and ill diet, let him apply himself with what diligence and skill he can to *the cure of his sore*, if he leave *the general habit of his body* under distempers, his labour and travail will be in vain. So will his attempts be that shall endeavour to stop a bloody issue of sin and filth in his soul, and is not equally careful of his universal spiritual temperature and constitution. For,—

(1.) This kind of endeavour for mortification proceeds from a *corrupt principle*, ground, and foundation; so that it will never proceed to a good issue. The true and acceptable principles of mortification shall be afterward insisted on. Hatred of sin as sin, not only as galling or disquieting, a sense of the love of Christ in the cross, lie at the bottom of all true spiritual mortification. Now, it

is certain that that which I speak of proceeds from *self-love*. Thou settest thyself with all diligence and earnestness to mortify such a lust or sin; what is the reason of it? It disquiets thee, it hath taken away thy peace, it fills thy heart with sorrow, and trouble, and fear; thou hast no rest because of it. Yea; but, friend, thou hast neglected prayer or reading; thou hast been vain and loose in thy conversation in other things, that have not been of the same nature with that lust wherewith thou art perplexed. These are no less sins and evils than those under which thou groanest. Jesus Christ bled for them also. Why dost thou not set thyself against them also? If thou hatest sin as sin—every evil way, thou wouldst be no less watchful against every thing that grieves and disquiets the Spirit of God, than against that which grieves and disquiets thine own soul. It is evident that thou contendest against *sin* merely because of thy own *trouble* by it. Would thy conscience be quiet under it, thou wouldst let it alone. Did it not disquiet thee, it should not be disquieted by thee. Now, canst thou think that God will set in with such hypocritical endeavours,—that ever his Spirit will bear witness to the treachery and falsehood of thy spirit? Dost thou think he will ease thee of that which perplexeth thee, that thou mayst be at liberty to that which no less grieves him? No. Says God, “Here is one—if he could be rid of this lust I should never hear of him more; let him wrestle with this, or he is lost.” Let not any man think to do

his own work that will not do God's. God's work consists in *universal obedience*; to be freed of the present perplexity is their own only. Hence is that of the apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 1, "Cleanse yourselves from all pollution of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." If we will do any thing, we must do all things. So, then, it is not only an intense opposition to this or that peculiar lust, but a universal humble frame and temper of heart, with watchfulness over every evil and for the performance of every duty, that is accepted.

(2.) How knowest thou but that God hath suffered the lust wherewith thou hast been perplexed to get strength in thee, and power over thee, to chasten thee for thy other negligences and common lukewarmness in walking before him; at least to awaken thee to the consideration of thy ways, that thou mayst make a thorough work and change in thy course of walking with him?

The rage and predominancy of a particular lust is commonly the fruit and issue of a careless, negligent course in general, and that upon a double account:—

[1.] As its *natural effect*, if I may so say. Lust, as I showed in general, lies in the heart of every one, even the best, whilst he lives; and think not that the Scripture speaks in vain, that it is subtle, cunning, crafty,—that it seduces, entices, fights, rebels. Whilst a man keeps a diligent watch over his heart, its root and fountain,—whilst above all keepings he keeps his heart, whence are the issues of life and death,—lust withers

and dies in it. But if, through negligence, it makes an eruption any particular way, gets a passage to the thoughts by the affections, and from them and by them perhaps breaks out into open sin in the conversation, the strength of it bears that way it hath found out, and that way mainly it urgeth, until, having got a passage, it then vexes and disquiets, and is not easily to be restrained: thus, perhaps, a man may be put to wrestle all his days in sorrow with that which, by a strict and universal watch, might easily have been prevented.

[2.] As I said, God oftentimes suffers it to *chasten* our other negligences: for as with wicked men, he gives them up to *one* sin as the judgment of another, *a greater for the punishment of a less*, or one that will hold them more firmly and securely for that which they might have possibly obtained a deliverance from;* so even with his own, he may, he doth, leave them sometimes to some vexatious distempers, either to prevent or cure some other evil. So was the messenger of Satan let loose on Paul, that he “might not be lifted up through the abundance of spiritual revelations.”† Was it not a correction to Peter’s vain confidence, that he was left to deny his Master? Now, if this be the state and condition of lust in its prevalency, that God oftentimes suffers it so to prevail, at least to admonish us, and to humble us, perhaps to chasten and correct us for our general loose and careless walking, is it possible that the *effect* should be removed and the

* Rom. i. 26.

† 2 Cor. xii. 7.

cause continued,—that the *particular* lust should be mortified and the *general* course be unreformed? He, then, that would really, thoroughly, and acceptably mortify any disquieting lust, let him take care to be equally diligent in all parts of obedience, and know that every lust, every omission of duty, is burdensome to God, though but one is so to him.* Whilst there abides a treachery in the heart to indulge to any negligence in not pressing universally to all perfection in obedience, the soul is *weak*, as not giving faith its whole work; and *selfish*, as considering more the trouble of sin than the filth and guilt of it; and lives under a constant *provocation* of God: so that it may not expect any comfortable issue in any spiritual duty that it doth undertake, much less in this under consideration, which requires another principle and frame of spirit for its accomplishment.

* Isa. xliii. 24.

CHAPTER IX.

Particular directions in relation to the foregoing case proposed—

FIRST. Consider the dangerous symptoms of any lust—1. Inveterateness—2. Peace obtained under it; the several ways whereby that is done—3. Frequency of success in its seductions—4. The soul's fighting against it with arguments only taken from the event—5. Its being attended with judiciary hardness—6. Its withstanding particular dealings from God—The state of persons in whom these things are found.

III. THE foregoing *general rules* being supposed, *particular directions* to the soul for its guidance under the sense of a disquieting lust or distemper, being the main thing I aim at, come next to be proposed. Now, of these some are previous and preparatory, and in some of them the work itself is contained. Of the *first sort* are these ensuing:—

FIRST. Consider what dangerous *symptoms* thy lust hath attending or accompanying it,—whether it hath any deadly mark on it or no; if it hath, *extraordinary* remedies are to be used; an ordinary course of mortification will not do it.

You will say, “What are these dangerous marks and *symptoms*, the desperate *attendancies* of an indwelling lust, that you intend?” Some of them I shall name:—

1. *Inveterateness*.—If it hath lain long corrupting in thy heart, if thou hast suffered it to abide in power and prevalency, without attempting vigorously the killing of it, and the healing of the wounds thou hast received by it, for some long season, thy distemper is dangerous. Hast thou permitted worldliness, ambition, greediness of study, to eat up other duties, the duties wherein thou oughtest to hold constant communion with God, for some long season? or uncleanness to defile thy heart with vain, and foolish, and wicked imaginations for many days? Thy lust hath a dangerous symptom. So was the case with David: Psa. xxxviii. 5, “My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.” When a lust hath lain long in the heart, corrupting, festering, cankering, it brings the soul to a woful condition. In such a case an ordinary course of humiliation will not do the work: whatever it be, it will by this means insinuate itself more or less into all the faculties of the soul, and habituate the affections to its company and society; it grows familiar to the mind and conscience, that they do not startle at it as a strange thing, but are bold with it as that which they are wonted unto; yea, it will get such advantage by this means as oftentimes to exert and put forth itself without having any notice taken of it at all, as it seems to have been with Joseph in his swearing by the life of Pharaoh. Unless some extraordinary course be taken, such a person hath no ground in the world to expect that his latter end shall be peace.

For, first, How will he be able to distinguish between the long abode of an *unmortified lust* and the *dominion of sin*, which cannot befall a regenerate person? Secondly, How can he promise himself that it shall ever be otherwise with him, or that his lust will cease tumultuating and seducing, when he sees it fixed and abiding, and hath done so for many days, and hath gone through a *variety* of conditions with him? It may be it hath tried *mercies* and *afflictions*, and those possibly so remarkable that the soul could not avoid the taking special notice of them; it may be it hath weathered out many a storm, and passed under much variety of gifts in the administration of the word; and will it prove an easy thing to dislodge an inmate pleading a title by prescription? Old neglected wounds are often mortal, always dangerous. Indwelling distempers grow rusty and stubborn by continuance in ease and quiet. Lust is such an inmate as, if it can plead time and some prescription, will not easily be ejected. As it never dies of itself, so if it be not daily killed it will always gather strength.

2. Secret pleas of the heart for the *countenancing* of itself, and keeping up its peace, notwithstanding the abiding of a lust, without a vigorous gospel attempt for its mortification, is another dangerous symptom of a deadly distemper in the heart. Now, there be several ways whereby this may be done. I shall name some of them; as,—

(1.) When upon *thoughts*, perplexing thoughts about

sin, instead of applying himself to the destruction of it, a man searches his heart to see what evidences he can find of a good condition, notwithstanding that sin and lust, so that it may go well with him.

For a man to gather up his experiences of God, to call them to mind, to collect them, consider, try, improve them, is an excellent thing,—a duty practised by all the saints, commended in the Old Testament and the New. This was David's work when he "communed with his own heart," and called to remembrance the former loving-kindness of the Lord.* This is the duty that Paul sets us to practise, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. And as it is in itself excellent, so it hath beauty added to it by a proper season, a time of trial or temptation, or disquietness of the heart about sin,—is a picture of silver to set off this golden apple, as Solomon speaks. But now to do it for this end, to satisfy conscience, which cries and calls for another purpose, is a desperate device of a heart in love with sin. When a man's conscience shall deal with him, when God shall rebuke him for the sinful distemper of his heart, if he, instead of applying himself to get that sin *pardoned* in the blood of Christ and *mortified* by his Spirit, shall relieve himself by any *such other evidences* as he hath, or thinks himself to have, and so disentangle himself from under the yoke that God was putting on his neck, his condition is very dangerous, his wound hardly curable. Thus the Jews, under the gallings of their own

* Psa. lxxvii. 6-9.

consciences and the convincing preaching of our Saviour, supported themselves with this, that they were "Abraham's children," and on that account accepted with God; and so countenanced themselves in all abominable wickedness to their utter ruin.

This is, in some degree, a blessing of a man's self, and saying that upon one account or other he shall have peace, "although he adds drunkenness to thirst." Love of sin, undervaluation of peace and of all tastes of love from God, are inwrapped in such a frame. Such a one plainly shows, that if he can but keep up hope of escaping the "wrath to come," he can be well content to be unfruitful in the world, at any distance from God that is not final separation. What is to be expected from such a heart?

(2.) By applying *grace and mercy* to an unmortified sin, or one not *sincerely* endeavoured to be mortified, is this deceit carried on. This is a sign of a heart greatly entangled with the love of sin. When a man hath secret thoughts in his heart, not unlike those of Naaman about his worshipping in the house of Rimmon,* "In all other things I will walk with God, but in this thing, God be merciful unto me," his condition is sad. It is true, indeed, a resolution to this purpose, to indulge a man's self in any sin on the account of mercy, seems to be, and doubtless in any course is, altogether inconsistent with Christian sincerity, and is a badge of a hypocrite,

* 2 Kings v. 18.

and is the “turning of the grace of God into wantonness;”* yet I doubt not but, through the craft of Satan and their own remaining unbelief, the children of God may themselves sometimes be ensnared with this deceit of sin, or else Paul would never have so cautioned them against it as he doth, Rom. vi. 1, 2. Yea, indeed, there is nothing more natural than for fleshly reasonings to grow high and strong upon this account. The flesh would fain be indulged unto upon the account of grace, and every word that is spoken of mercy, it stands ready to catch at and to pervert it, to its own corrupt aims and purposes. To apply mercy, then, to a sin not vigorously mortified is to fulfil the end of the flesh upon the gospel.

These and many other ways and wiles a deceitful heart will sometimes make use of, to countenance itself in its abominations. Now, when a man with his sin is in this condition, that there is a secret liking of the sin prevalent in his heart, and though his will be not wholly set upon it, yet he hath an imperfect velleity† towards it, he would practise it were it not for such and such considerations, and hereupon relieves himself other ways than by the mortification and pardon of it in the blood of Christ; that man’s “wounds stink and are corrupt,” and he will, without speedy deliverance, be at the door of death.

3. *Frequency of success* in sin’s seduction, in obtaining the prevailing consent of the will unto it, is another

* Jude 4.

† Desire, inclination.

dangerous symptom. This is what I mean : when the sin spoken of gets the consent of the will with some *delight*, though it be not actually outwardly perpetrated, yet it hath success. A man may not be able, upon outward considerations, to go along with sin to that which James calls the “finishing” of it,* as to the outward acts of sin, when yet the will of sinning may be actually obtained ; then hath it, I say, success. Now, if any lust be able thus far to prevail in the soul of any man, as his condition may possibly be very bad and himself be unregenerate, so it cannot possibly be very good, but dangerous ; and it is all one upon the matter whether this be done by the choice of the will or by inadvertency, for that inadvertency itself is in a manner chosen. When we are inadvertent and negligent, where we are bound to watchfulness and carefulness, that inadvertency doth not take off from the voluntariness of what we do thereupon ; for although men do not choose and resolve to be negligent and inadvertent, yet if they choose the things that will make them so, they choose inadvertency itself as a thing may be chosen in its cause.

And let not men think that the evil of their hearts is in any measure extenuated because they seem, for the most part, to be surprised into that consent which they seem to give unto it ; for it is negligence of their duty in watching over their hearts that betrays them into that surprisal.

* James i. 14, 15.

4. When a man fighteth against his sin only with *arguments from the issue* or the punishment due unto it, this is a sign that sin hath taken great possession of the will, and that in the heart there is a superfluity of naughtiness. Such a man as opposes nothing to the seduction of sin and lust in his heart but fear of shame among men or hell from God, is sufficiently resolved to do the sin if there were no punishment attending it; which, what it differs from living in the practice of sin, I know not. Those who are Christ's, and are acted in their obedience upon gospel principles, have the death of Christ, the love of God, the detestable nature of sin, the preciousness of communion with God, a deep-grounded abhorrency of sin *as sin*, to oppose to any seduction of sin, to all the workings, strivings, fightings of lust in their hearts. So did Joseph. "How shall I do this great evil," saith he, "and sin against the LORD?" my good and gracious God.* And Paul, "The love of Christ constraineth us;"† and, "Having received these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all pollution of the flesh and spirit," 2 Cor. vii. 1. But now if a man be so under the power of his lust that he hath nothing but law to oppose it withal, if he cannot fight against it with gospel weapons, but deals with it altogether with hell and judgment, which are the proper arms of the law, it is most evident that sin hath possessed itself of his will and affections to a very great prevalency and conquest.

* Gen. xxxix. 9.

† 2 Cor. v. 14.

Such a person hath cast off, as to the particular spoken of, the conduct of *renewing* grace, and is kept from ruin only by *restraining* grace; and so far is he fallen from grace, and returned under the power of the law. And can it be thought that this is not a great provocation to Christ, that men should cast off his easy, gentle yoke and rule, and cast themselves under the iron yoke of the law, merely out of indulgence unto their lusts?

Try thyself by this also: When thou art by sin driven to make a stand, so that thou must either serve it and rush at the command of it into folly, like the horse into the battle, or make head against it to suppress it, what dost thou say to thy soul? what dost thou expostulate with thyself? Is this all,—“Hell will be the end of this course; vengeance will meet with me and find me out?” It is time for thee to look about thee; evil lies at the door. Paul’s main argument to evince that sin shall not have dominion over believers is, that they “are not under the law, but under grace,” Rom. vi. 14. If thy contentings against sin be all on legal accounts, from legal principles and motives, what assurance canst thou attain unto that sin shall not have dominion over thee, which will be thy ruin?

Yea, know that this reserve will not long hold out. If thy lust hath driven thee from stronger gospel forts, it will speedily prevail against this also. Do not suppose that such considerations will deliver thee, when thou hast voluntarily given up to thine enemy those helps and

means of preservation which have a thousand times their strength. Rest assuredly in this, that unless thou recover thyself with speed from this condition, the thing that thou fearest will come upon thee. What *gospel principles* do not, *legal motives* cannot do.

5. When it is probable that there is, or may be, somewhat of judiciary hardness, or at least of chastening punishment, in thy lust as disquieting; this is another dangerous symptom. That God does sometimes leave even those of his own under the perplexing power at least of some lust or sin, to correct them for former sins, negligence, and folly, I no way doubt. Hence was that complaint of the church, "Why hast thou hardened our heart from thy fear?" Isa. lxiii. 17. That this is his way of dealing with unregenerate men no man questions. But how shall a man know whether there be any thing of God's chastening hand in his being left to the disquietment of his distemper? *Ans.* Examine thy heart and ways. What was the state and condition of thy soul before thou fellest into the entanglements of that sin which now thou so complainest of? Hadst thou been negligent in duties? Hadst thou lived inordinately to thyself? Is there the guilt of any great sin lying upon thee unrepented of? *A new sin may be permitted,* as well as a *new affliction sent*, to bring an old sin to remembrance.

Hast thou received any eminent mercy, protection, deliverance, which thou didst not improve in a due man-

ner, nor wast thankful for? or hast thou been exercised with any affliction without labouring for the appointed end of it? or hast thou been wanting to the opportunities of glorifying God in thy generation, which, in his good providence, he had graciously afforded unto thee? or hast thou conformed thyself unto the world and the men of it, through the abounding of temptations in the days wherein thou livest? If thou findest this to have been thy state, awake, call upon God; thou art fast asleep in a storm of anger round about thee.

6. When thy lust hath already *withstood* particular dealings from God against it. This condition is described, Isa. lvii. 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." God had dealt with them about their prevailing lust, and that several ways,—by affliction and desertion; but they held out against all. This is a sad condition, which nothing but *mere sovereign grace* (as God expresses it in the next verse) can relieve a man in, and which no man ought to promise himself or bear himself upon. God oftentimes, in his providential dispensations, meets with a man, and speaks particularly to the evil of his heart, as he did to Joseph's brethren in their selling of him into Egypt. This makes the man reflect on his sin, and judge himself in particular for it. God makes it to be the voice of the danger, affliction, trouble, sickness that he is in or under. Sometimes in reading of the word God makes a man stay on something that

cuts him to the heart, and shakes him as to his present condition. More frequently in the hearing of the word preached, his great ordinance for conviction, conversion, and edification, doth he meet with men. God often hews men by the sword of his word in that ordinance, strikes directly on their bosom-beloved lust, startles the sinner, makes him engage unto the mortification and relinquishment of the evil of his heart. Now, if his lust have taken such hold on him as to enforce him to break these bands of the Lord, and to cast these cords from him,—if it overcomes these convictions, and gets again into its old posture,—if it can cure the wounds it so receives,—that soul is in a sad condition.

Unspeakable are the evils which attend such a frame of heart. Every particular warning to a man in such an estate is an inestimable mercy; how then doth he despise God in them who holds out against them! And what infinite patience is this in God, that he doth not cast off such a one, and swear in his wrath that he shall never enter into his rest!

These and many other evidences are there of a lust that is dangerous, if not mortal. As our Saviour said of the evil spirit, “This kind goes not out but by fasting and prayer,” so say I of lusts of this kind. An ordinary course of mortification will not do it; extraordinary ways must be fixed on.

This is the first particular direction: Consider whether

the lust or sin you are contending with hath any of these dangerous symptoms attending of it.

Before I proceed I must give you one caution by the way, lest any be deceived by what hath been spoken. Whereas I say the things and evils above-mentioned may befall true believers, let not any that finds the same things in himself thence or from thence conclude that he is a true believer. These are the evils that believers may fall into and be ensnared withal, not the things that constitute a believer. A man may as well conclude that he is a believer because he is an adulterer, because David that was so, fell into adultery, as conclude it from the signs foregoing; which are the evils of sin and Satan in the hearts of believers. The seventh chapter of the Romans contains the description of a regenerate man. He that shall consider what is spoken of his dark side, of his unregenerate part, of the indwelling power and violence of sin remaining in him, and because he finds the like in himself, conclude that he is a regenerate man, will be deceived in his reckoning. It is all one as if you should argue: A wise man may be sick and wounded, yea, do some things foolishly; therefore, every one who is sick and wounded and does things foolishly is a wise man. Or as if a silly, deformed creature, hearing one speak of a beautiful person, and saying that he had a mark or a scar that much disfigured him; should conclude that because he hath himself scars, and moles, and warts, he also is beautiful. If you will have evi-

dences of your being believers, it must be done from those things that constitute men believers. He that hath these things in himself may safely conclude, "If I am a believer, I am a most miserable one." But that any man is so, he must look for other evidences if he will have peace.

CHAPTER X.

The SECOND particular direction: Get a clear sense of,—1. The guilt of the sin perplexing—Considerations for help therein proposed—2. The danger manifold—(1.) Hardening—(2.) Temporal correction—(3.) Loss of peace and strength—(4.) Eternal destruction—Rules for the management of this consideration—3. The evil of it—(1.) In grieving the Spirit—(2.) Wounding the new creature—[(3.) Taking away a man's usefulness.]

THE SECOND direction is this: *Get a clear and abiding sense upon thy mind and conscience of the guilt, danger, and evil of that sin wherewith thou art perplexed:—*

1. Of the *guilt* of it. It is one of the deceits of a prevailing lust to extenuate its own guilt. "Is it not a little one?" "When I go and bow myself in the house of Rimmon, God be merciful to me in this thing." "Though this be bad, yet it is not so bad as such and such an evil; others of the people of God have had such a frame; yea, what dreadful actual sins have some of them fallen into!" Innumerable ways there are whereby sin diverts the mind from a right and due apprehension of its guilt. Its noisome exhalations darken the mind, that it cannot make a right judgment of things. Perplexing reasonings, extenuating promises, tumultuating desires, treacherous purposes of relinquishment,

hopes of mercy, all have their share in disturbing the mind in its consideration of the guilt of a prevailing lust. The prophet tells us that lust will do thus wholly when it comes to the height: Hos. iv. 11, "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart,"—the heart, that is the understanding, as it is often used in the Scripture. And as they accomplish this work to the height in unregenerate persons, so in part in regenerate also. Solomon tells you of him who was enticed by the lewd woman, that he was "among the simple ones;" he was "a young man void of understanding," Prov. vii. 7. And wherein did his folly appear? Why, says he, in the 23d verse, "He knew not that it was for his life;" he considered not the guilt of the evil that he was involved in. And the Lord, rendering a reason why his dealings with Ephraim took no better effect, gives this account: "Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart," Hos. vii. 11;—had no understanding of his own miserable condition. Had it been possible that David should have lain so long in the guilt of that abominable sin, but that he had innumerable corrupt reasonings, hindering him from taking a clear view of its ugliness and guilt in the glass of the law? This made the prophet that was sent for his awaking, in his dealings with him, to shut up all subterfuges and pretences by his parable, that so he might fall fully under a sense of the guilt of it. This is the proper issue of lust in the heart,—it darkens the mind that it shall not judge aright of its guilt; and

many other ways it hath for its own extenuation that I shall not now insist on.

Let this, then, be the first care of him that would mortify sin,—to fix a right judgment of its guilt in his mind. To which end take these considerations to thy assistance:—

(1.) Though the power of sin be weakened by *inherent grace* in them that have it, that sin shall not have dominion over them as it hath over others, yet *the guilt of sin that doth yet abide and remain is aggravated and heightened by it*: Rom. vi. 1, 2, “What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”—“How shall we, that are dead?” The emphasis is on the word “we.” How shall *we* do it, who, as he afterward describes it, have received grace from Christ to the contrary? We, doubtless, are more evil than any, if we do it. I shall not insist on the special aggravations of the sins of such persons,—how they sin against more love, mercy, grace, assistance, relief, means, and deliverances than others. But let this consideration abide in thy mind,—there is inconceivably more evil and guilt in the evil of thy heart that doth remain, than there would be in so much sin if thou hadst no grace at all. Observe,—

(2.) That as God sees abundance of beauty and excellency in the desires of the heart of his servants, more than in any the most glorious works of other men, yea,

more than in most of their own outward performances, which have a greater mixture of sin than the desires and pantings of grace in the heart have; so God sees *a great deal of evil in the working of lust in their hearts, yea, and more than in the open, notorious acts of wicked men*, or in many outward sins whereinto the saints may fall, seeing against them there is more opposition made, and more humiliation generally follows them. Thus Christ, dealing with his decaying children, goes to the root with them, lays aside their profession: Rev. iii. 15, "I know thee;"—"Thou art quite another thing than thou professest; and this makes thee abominable."

So, then, let these things, and the like considerations, lead thee to a clear sense of the guilt of thy indwelling lust, that there may be no room in thy heart for extenuating or excusing thoughts, whereby sin insensibly will get strength and prevail.

2. Consider the *danger* of it, which is manifold:—

(1.) Of being *hardened by its deceitfulness*. This the apostle sorely charges on the Hebrews, chap. iii. 12, 13, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." "Take heed," saith he, "use all means, consider your temptations, watch diligently; there is a treachery, a deceit in sin, that tends to the hardening of your hearts from the fear of God." The hardening here

mentioned is to the utmost,—utter obduration; sin tends to it, and every distemper and lust will make at least some progress towards it. Thou that wast tender, and didst use to melt under the word, under afflictions, wilt grow as some have profanely spoken, “sermon-proof and sickness-proof.” Thou that didst tremble at the presence of God, thoughts of death, and appearance before him, when thou hadst more assurance of his love than now thou hast, shalt have a stoutness upon thy spirit not to be moved by these things. Thy soul and thy sin shall be spoken of and spoken to, and thou shalt not be at all concerned, but shalt be able to pass over duties, praying, hearing, reading, and thy heart not in the least affected. Sin will grow *a light thing* to thee; thou wilt pass it by as a thing of nought; this it will grow to. And what will be the end of such a condition? Can a sadder thing befall thee? Is it not enough to make any heart to tremble, to think of being brought into that estate wherein he should have slight thoughts of sin? Slight thoughts of grace, of mercy, of the blood of Christ, of the law, heaven, and hell, come all in at the same season. Take heed, this is what thy lust is working towards,—the hardening of the heart, searing of the conscience, blinding of the mind, stupefying of the affections, and deceiving of the whole soul.

(2.) The danger of some great *temporal correction*, which the Scripture calls “vengeance,” “judgment,” and “punishment.” Psa. lxxxix. 30–33, Though God

should not utterly cast thee off for this abomination that lies in thy heart, yet he will visit thee with the rod; though he pardon and forgive, he will take vengeance of thy inventions. O remember David and all his troubles! look on him flying into the wilderness, and consider the hand of God upon him. Is it nothing to thee that God should kill thy child in anger, ruin thy estate in anger, break thy bones in anger, suffer thee to be a scandal and reproach in anger, kill thee, destroy thee, make thee lie down in darkness, in anger? Is it nothing that he should punish, ruin, and undo others for thy sake? Let me not be mistaken. I do not mean that God doth send all these things always on *his* in anger; God forbid! but this I say, that when he doth so deal with thee, and thy conscience bears witness with him what thy provocations have been, thou wilt find his dealings full of bitterness to thy soul. If *thou fearest* not these things, *I fear* thou art under hardness.

(3.) *Loss of peace and strength* all a man's days. To have peace with God, to have strength to walk before God, is the sum of the great promises of the covenant of grace. In these things is the life of our souls. Without them in some comfortable measure, to live is to die. What good will our lives do us if we see not the face of God sometimes in peace? if we have not some strength to walk with him? Now, both these will an unmortified lust certainly deprive the souls of men of. This case is so evident in David, as that nothing can be more clear.

How often doth he complain that his bones were broken, his soul disquieted, his wounds grievous, on this account ! Take other instances : Isa. lvii. 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and hid myself." What peace, I pray, is there to a soul while God hides himself, or strength whilst he smites ? Hos. v. 15, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face ;"—"I will leave them, hide my face, and what will become of their peace and strength ?" If ever, then, thou hast enjoyed peace with God, if ever his terrors have made thee afraid, if ever thou hast had strength to walk with him, or ever hast mourned in thy prayer, and been troubled because of thy weakness, think of this danger that hangs over thy head. It is perhaps but a little while and thou shalt see the face of God in peace no more. Perhaps by to-morrow thou shalt not be able to pray, read, hear, or perform any duties with the least cheerfulness, life, or vigour ; and possibly thou mayst never see a quiet hour whilst thou livest,—that thou mayst carry about thee broken bones, full of pain and terror, all the days of thy life. Yea, perhaps God will shoot his arrows at thee, and fill thee with anguish and disquietness, with fears and perplexities ; make thee a terror and an astonishment to thyself and others ; show thee hell and wrath every moment ; frighten and scare thee with sad apprehensions of his hatred ; so that thy soul shall refuse comfort ; so that thou

shalt wish death rather than life, yea, thy soul may choose strangling. Consider this a little,—though God should not utterly destroy thee, yet he might cast thee into this condition, wherein thou shalt have quick and living apprehensions of thy destruction. Use thy heart to thoughts hereof; let it know what is like to be the issue of its state. Leave not this consideration until thou hast made thy soul to tremble within thee.

(4.) There is the danger of *eternal destruction*.

For the due arrangement of this consideration, observe,—

[1.] That there is such a *connection* between a *continuance in sin* and *eternal destruction*, that though God does resolve to deliver some from a continuance in sin that they may not be destroyed, yet he will deliver none from destruction that continue in sin; so that whilst any one lies under an abiding power of sin, the threats of destruction and everlasting separation from God are to be held out to him. So Heb. iii. 12; to which add chap. x. 38. This is the rule of God's proceeding: If any man "depart" from him, "draw back" through unbelief, "God's soul hath no pleasure in him;"—that is, his indignation shall pursue him to destruction: so evidently, Gal. vi. 8.

[2.] That he who is so *entangled*, as above described, under the power of any corruption, can have at that present no clear prevailing evidence of his interest in the covenant, by the efficacy whereof he may be delivered

from fear of destruction ; so that destruction from the Lord may justly be a terror to him, and he may, he ought to look upon it, as that which will be *the end of his course and ways*. “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” Rom. viii. 1. True ; but who shall have the comfort of this assertion ? who may assume it to himself ? “They that walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh.” But you will say, “Is not this to persuade men to unbelief ?” I answer, No. There is a twofold judgment that a man may make of himself,—first, of his *person* ; and, secondly, of his *ways*. It is the judgment of his ways, not his person, that I speak of. Let a man get the best evidence for his person that he can, yet to judge that an evil way will end in destruction is his duty ; not to do it is atheism. I do not say, that in such a condition a man ought to throw away the evidences of his personal interest in Christ ; but I say, he cannot keep them. There is a twofold condemnation of a man’s self :—First, in respect of *desert*, when the soul concludes that it deserves to be cast out of the presence of God ; and this is so far from a business of unbelief that it is an effect of faith. Secondly. With respect to the *issue and event*, when the soul concludes it shall be damned. I do not say this is the duty of any one, nor do I call them to it ; but this I say, that the end of the way wherein a man is ought by him to be concluded to be death, that he may be provoked to fly from it. And this is another consideration

that ought to dwell upon such a soul, if it desire to be freed from the entanglement of its lusts.

3. Consider the *evils* of it; I mean its *present evils*. Danger respects what is to come; evil, what is present. Some of the many evils that attend an unmortified lust may be mentioned:—

(1.) It *grieves* the holy and blessed Spirit, which is given to believers to dwell in them and abide with them. So the apostle, Eph. iv. 25–29, dehorting them from many lusts and sins, gives this as the great motive of it, verse 30, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” “Grieve not that Spirit of God,” saith he, “whereby you receive so many and so great benefits;” of which he instances in one signal and comprehensive one,—“sealing to the day of redemption.” He is grieved by it. As a tender and loving friend is grieved at the unkindness of his friend, of whom he hath well deserved, so is it with this tender and loving Spirit, who hath chosen our hearts for a habitation to dwell in, and there to do for us all that our souls desire. He is grieved by our harbouring his enemies, and those whom he is to destroy, in our hearts with him. “He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve us,” Lam. iii. 33; and shall we daily grieve him? Thus is he said sometimes to be “vexed,” sometimes “grieved at his heart,” to express the greatest sense of our provocation. Now, if there be any thing of gracious ingenu-

ity left in the soul, if it be not utterly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, this consideration will certainly affect it. Consider who and what thou art; who the Spirit is that is grieved, what he hath done for thee, what he comes to thy soul about, what he hath already done in thee; and be ashamed. Among those who walk with God, there is no greater motive and incentive unto universal holiness, and the preserving of their hearts and spirits in all purity and cleanness, than this, that the blessed Spirit, who hath undertaken to dwell in them as temples of God, and to preserve them meet for him who so dwells in them, is continually considering what they give entertainment in their hearts unto, and rejoiceth when his temple is kept undefiled. That was a high aggravation of the sin of Zimri, that he brought his adulteress into the congregation in the sight of Moses and the rest, who were weeping for the sins of the people, Numb. xxv. 6. And is it not a high aggravation of the countenancing a lust, or suffering it to abide in the heart, when it is (as it must be, if we are believers) entertained under the peculiar eye and view of the Holy Ghost, taking care to preserve his tabernacle pure and holy?

(2.) The *Lord Jesus Christ is wounded afresh* by it; his new creature in the heart is wounded; his love is foiled; his adversary gratified. As a total relinquishment of him, by the deceitfulness of sin, is the “cruci-

fyng him afresh, and the putting of him to open shame;" so every harbouring of sin that he came to destroy wounds and grieves him.

(3.) It will *take away a man's usefulness* in his generation. His works, his endeavours, his labours, seldom receive blessing from God. If he be a preacher, God commonly blows upon his ministry, that he shall labour in the fire, and not be honoured with any success or doing any work for God; and the like may be spoken of other conditions. The world is at this day full of poor withering professors. How few are there that walk in my beauty or glory! how barren, how useless are they, for the most part! Amongst the many reasons that may be assigned of this sad estate, it may justly be feared that this is none of the least effectual, —many men harbour spirit-devouring lusts in their bosoms, that lie as worms at the root of their obedience, and corrode and weaken it day by day. All graces, all the ways and means whereby any graces may be exercised and improved, are prejudiced by this means; and as to any success, God blasts such men's undertakings.

This, then, is my second direction, and it regards the opposition that is to be made to lust in respect of its habitual residence in the soul:—Keep alive upon thy heart these or the like considerations of its guilt, danger, and evil; be much in the meditation of these things;

cause thy heart to dwell and abide upon them; engage thy thoughts into these considerations; let them not go off nor wander from them until they begin to have a powerful influence upon thy soul,—until they make it to tremble.

CHAPTER XI.

The THIRD direction proposed: Load thy conscience with the guilt of the perplexing distemper—The ways and means whereby that may be done—The FOURTH direction: Vehement desire for deliverance—The FIFTH: Some distempers rooted deeply in men's natural tempers—Considerations of such distempers; ways of dealing with them—The SIXTH direction: Occasions and advantages of sin to be prevented—The SEVENTH direction: The first actings of sin vigorously to be opposed.

THIS is my THIRD direction,—

Load thy conscience with the guilt of it. Not only consider that it hath a guilt, but load thy conscience with the guilt of its actual eruptions and disturbances.

For the right improvement of this rule I shall give some particular directions:—

1. Take *God's method* in it, and begin with generals, and so descend to particulars:—

(1.) Charge thy conscience with that guilt which appears in it *from the rectitude and holiness of the law*. Bring the holy law of God into thy conscience, lay thy corruption to it, pray that thou mayst be affected with it. Consider the holiness, spirituality, fiery severity, inwardness, absoluteness of the law, and see how thou canst stand before it. Be much, I say, in affecting thy con-

science with the terror of the Lord in the law, and how righteous it is that every one of thy transgressions should receive a recompense of reward. Perhaps thy conscience will invent shifts and evasions to keep off the power of this consideration ;—as, that the condemning power of the law doth not belong to thee, thou art set free from it, and the like ; and so, though thou be not conformable to it, yet thou needst not to be so much troubled at it. But,—

[1.] Tell thy conscience that it cannot manage any evidence to the purpose that thou art free from the *condemning* power of sin, whilst thy *unmortified* lust lies in thy heart ; so that, perhaps, the law may make good its plea against thee for a full dominion, and then thou art a lost creature. Wherefore it is best to ponder to the utmost what it hath to say.

Assuredly, he that pleads in the most secret reserve of his heart that he is freed from the condemning power of the law, thereby secretly to countenance himself in giving the least allowance unto any sin or lust, is not able, on gospel grounds, to manage any evidence, unto any tolerable spiritual security, that indeed he is in a due manner freed from what he so pretends himself to be delivered from.

[2.] Whatever be the *issue*, yet the law hath commission from God to seize upon transgressors wherever it finds them, and so bring them before his throne, where they are to plead for themselves. This is thy present

case; the law hath found thee out, and before God it will bring thee. If thou canst plead a pardon, well and good; if not, the law will do its work.

[3.] However, this is the *proper work* of the law, to discover sin in the guilt of it, to awake and humble the soul for it, to be a glass to represent sin in its colours; and if thou deniest to deal with it on this account, it is not through faith, but through the hardness of thy heart and the deceitfulness of sin.

This is a door that too many professors have gone out at unto open apostasy. Such a deliverance from the law they have pretended, as that they would consult its guidance and direction no more; they would measure their sin by it no more. By little and little this principle hath insensibly, from the notion of it, proceeded to influence their practical understandings, and, having taken possession there, hath turned the will and affections loose to all manner of abominations.

By such ways, I say, then, as these, persuade thy conscience to hearken diligently to what the law speaks, in the name of the Lord, unto thee about thy lust and corruption. Oh! if thy ears be open, it will speak with a voice that shall make thee tremble, that shall cast thee to the ground, and fill thee with astonishment. If ever thou wilt mortify thy corruptions, thou must tie up thy conscience to the law, shut it from all shifts and exceptions, until it owns its guilt with a clear and thorough

apprehension; so that thence, as David speaks, thy “iniquity may ever be before thee.”

(2.) Bring *thy lust to the gospel*,—not for relief, but for further conviction of its guilt; look on Him whom thou hast pierced, and be in bitterness. Say to thy soul, “What have I done? What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled on! Is this the return I make to the Father for his *love*, to the Son for his *blood*, to the Holy Ghost for his *grace*? Do I thus requite the Lord? Have I defiled the heart that Christ died to wash, that the blessed Spirit hath chosen to dwell in? And can I keep myself out of the dust? What can I say to the dear Lord Jesus? How shall I hold up my head with any boldness before him? Do I account communion with him of so little value, that for this vile lust’s sake I have scarce left him any room in my heart? How shall I escape if I neglect so great salvation? In the meantime, what shall I say to the Lord? Love, mercy, grace, goodness, peace, joy, consolation,—I have despised them all, and esteemed them as a thing of nought, that I might harbour a lust in my heart. Have I obtained a view of God’s fatherly countenance, that I might behold his face and provoke him to his face? Was my soul washed, that room might be made for new defilements? Shall I endeavour to disappoint the end of the death of Christ? Shall I daily grieve that Spirit whereby I am sealed to the day of redemption? Entertain thy conscience daily with this

treaty. See if it can stand before this aggravation of its guilt. If this make it not sink in some measure and melt, I fear thy case is dangerous.

2. Descend to *particulars*. As under the general head of the gospel all the benefits of it are to be considered, as redemption, justification, and the like; so, in particular, consider the management of the love of them towards thine own soul, for the aggravation of the guilt of thy corruption. As,—

(1.) Consider *the infinite patience and forbearance* of God towards thee in particular. Consider what advantages he might have taken against thee, to have made thee a shame and a reproach in this world, and an object of wrath for ever; how thou hast dealt treacherously and falsely with him from time to time, flattered him with thy lips, but broken all promises and engagements, and that by the means of that sin thou art now in pursuit of; and yet he hath spared thee from time to time, although thou seemest boldly to have put it to the trial how long he could hold out. And wilt thou yet sin against him? wilt thou yet weary him, and make him to serve with thy corruptions?

Hast thou not often been ready to conclude thyself, that it was utterly impossible that he should bear any longer with thee; that he would cast thee off, and be gracious no more; that all his forbearance was exhausted, and hell and wrath was even ready prepared for thee? and yet, above all thy expectation, he hath re-

turned with visitations of love. And wilt thou yet abide in the provocation of the eyes of his glory?

(2.) How often hast thou been *at the door of being hardened* by the deceitfulness of sin, and by the infinite rich grace of God hast been recovered to communion with him again?

Hast thou not found grace decaying; delight in duties, ordinances, prayer and meditation, vanishing; inclinations to loose careless walking, thriving? Hast thou not found thyself engaged in such ways, societies, companies, and that with delight, as God abhors? And wilt thou venture any more to the brink of hardness?

(3.) All God's gracious dealings with thee, in providential dispensations, deliverances, afflictions, mercies, enjoyments, all ought here to take place. By these, I say, and the like means, load thy conscience; and leave it not until it be thoroughly affected with the guilt of thy indwelling corruption, until it is sensible of its wound, and lie in the dust before the Lord. Unless this be done to the purpose, all other endeavours are to no purpose. Whilst the conscience hath any means to alleviate the guilt of sin, the soul will never vigorously attempt its mortification.

FOURTHLY. Being thus affected with thy sin, in the next place get *a constant longing, breathing after deliverance from the power of it*. Suffer not thy heart one moment to be contented with thy present frame and condition. Longing desires after any thing, in things natural

and civil, are of no value or consideration, any further but as they incite and stir up the person in whom they are to a diligent use of means for the bringing about the thing aimed at. In spiritual things it is otherwise. Longing, breathing, and panting after deliverance is a grace in itself, that hath a mighty power to conform the soul into the likeness of the thing longed after. Hence the apostle, describing the repentance and godly sorrow of the Corinthians, reckons this as one eminent grace that was then set on work, "vehement desire," 2 Cor. vii. 11. And in this case of indwelling sin and the power of it, what frame doth he express himself to be in? Rom. vii. 24. His heart breaks out with longings into a more passionate expression of desire of deliverance. Now, if this be the frame of saints upon the general consideration of indwelling sin, how is it to be heightened and increased when thereunto is added the perplexing rage and power of any particular lust and corruption! Assure thyself, unless thou *longest* for deliverance thou shalt not have it.

This will make the heart watchful for all opportunities of advantage against its enemy, and ready to close with any assistances that are afforded for its destruction. Strong desires are the very life of that "praying always" which is enjoined us in all conditions, and in none is more necessary than in this; they set faith and hope on work, and are the soul's moving after the Lord.

Get thy heart, then, into a panting and breathing

frame ; long, sigh, cry out. You know the example of David ; I shall not need to insist on it.

The FIFTH direction is,—

Consider whether the distemper with which thou art perplexed be not rooted in thy *nature*, and cherished, fomented, and heightened from thy *constitution*. A proneness to some sins may doubtless lie in the natural temper and disposition of men. In this case consider,—

1. This is not in the least an *extenuation* of the guilt of thy sin. Some, with an open profaneness, will ascribe gross enormities to their temper and disposition ; and whether others may not relieve themselves from the pressing guilt of their distempers by the same consideration, I know not. It is from the fall, from the original depravation of our natures, that the *fuel* and nourishment of any sin abides in our natural temper. David reckons his being shapen in iniquity and conception in sin* as an aggravation of his following sin, not a lessening or extenuation of it. That thou art peculiarly inclined unto any sinful distemper is but a peculiar breaking out of original lust in thy nature, which should peculiarly abase and humble thee.

2. That all thou hast to *fix* upon on this account, in reference to thy walking with God, is, that so great an advantage is given to sin, as also to Satan, by this thy temper and disposition, that without extraordinary watchfulness, care, and diligence, they will assuredly prevail against

* Psa. li. 5.

thy soul. Thousands have been on this account hurried headlong to hell, who otherwise, at least, might have gone at a more gentle, less provoking, less mischievous rate.

3. For the mortification of any distemper so rooted in the nature of a man, unto all other ways and means already named or further to be insisted on, there is one *expedient* peculiarly suited; this is that of the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 27, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." The bringing of the very body into subjection is an ordinance of God tending to the mortification of sin. This gives check unto the natural root of the distemper, and withers it by taking away its fatness of soil. Perhaps, because the Papists, men ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, the work of his Spirit, and whole business in hand, have laid the whole weight and stress of mortification in voluntary services and penances, leading to the subjection of the body, knowing indeed the true nature neither of sin nor mortification, it may, on the other side, be a temptation to some to neglect some means of humiliation which by God himself are owned and appointed. The bringing of the body into subjection in the case insisted on, by cutting short the natural appetite, by fasting, watching, and the like, is doubtless acceptable to God, so it be done with the ensuing limitations:—

(1.) That the outward weakening and impairing of the body be not looked upon as a thing good in itself, or that

any mortification doth consist therein,—which were again to bring us under carnal ordinances; but only as a means for the end proposed,—the weakening of any distemper in its natural root and seat. A man may have leanness of body and soul together.

(2.) That the means whereby this is done,—namely, by fasting and watching, and the like,—be not looked on as things that in themselves, and by virtue of their own power, can produce true mortification of any sin; for if they would, sin might be mortified without any help of the Spirit in any unregenerate person in the world. They are to be looked on only as ways whereby the Spirit may, and sometimes doth, put forth strength for the accomplishing of his own work, especially in the case mentioned. Want of a right understanding and due improvement of these and the like considerations, hath raised a mortification among the Papists that may be better applied to horses and other beasts of the field than to believers.

This is the sum of what hath been spoken: When the distemper complained of seems to be rooted in the natural temper and constitution, in applying our souls to a participation of the blood and Spirit of Christ, an endeavour is to be used to give check in the way of God to the natural root of that distemper.

The SIXTH direction is,—

Consider what *occasions*, what *advantages* thy dis-

temper hath taken to exert and put forth itself, and watch against them all.

This is one part of that duty which our blessed Saviour recommends to his disciples under the name of *watching*: Mark xiii. 37, "I say unto you all, Watch;" which, in Luke xxi. 34, is, "Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged." Watch against all eruptions of thy corruptions. I mean that duty which David professed himself to be exercised unto. "I have," saith he, "kept myself from mine iniquity." He watched all the ways and workings of his iniquity, to prevent them, to rise up against them. This is that which we are called unto under the name of "considering our ways." Consider what ways, what companies, what opportunities, what studies, what businesses, what conditions, have at any time given, or do usually give, advantages to thy distempers, and set thyself heedfully against them all. Men will do this with respect unto their bodily infirmities and distempers. The seasons, the diet, the air that have proved offensive shall be avoided. Are the things of the soul of less importance? Know that he that dares to dally with occasions of sin will dare to sin. He that will venture upon temptation unto wickedness will venture upon wickedness. Hazael thought he should not be so wicked as the prophet told him he would be. To convince him, the prophet tells him no more but, "Thou shalt be king of Syria." If he will venture on

temptations unto cruelty, he will be cruel. Tell a man he shall commit such and such sins, he will startle at it. If you can convince him that he will venture on such occasions and temptations of them, he will have little ground left for his confidence. Particular directions belonging to this head are many, not now to be insisted on. But because this head is of no less importance than the whole doctrine here handled, I have at large in another treatise, about entering into temptation, treated of it.

The SEVENTH direction is,—

Rise mightily against *the first actings* of thy dis-temper, its first conceptions; suffer it not to get the least ground. Do not say, “Thus far it shall go, and no further.” If it have allowance for one step, it will take another. It is impossible to fix bounds to sin. It is like water in a channel,—if it once break out, it will have its course. Its not acting is easier to be compassed than its bounding. Therefore doth James give that gradation and process of lust, chap. i. 14, 15, that we may stop at the entrance. Dost thou find thy corruption to begin to entangle thy thoughts? rise up with all thy strength against it, with no less indignation than if it had fully accomplished what it aims at. Consider what an unclean thought would have; it would have thee roll thyself in folly and filth. Ask *envy* what it would have;—*murder* and *destruction* is at the end of

it. Set thyself against it with no less vigour than if it had utterly debased thee to wickedness. Without this course thou wilt not prevail. As sin gets ground in the affections to delight in, it gets also upon the understanding to slight it.

CHAPTER XII.

The EIGHTH direction: Thoughtfulness of the excellency of the majesty of God—Our unacquaintedness with him proposed and considered.

EIGHTHLY—Use and exercise thyself to such meditations as may serve to fill thee at all times with *self-abasement* and thoughts of thine own vileness; as,—

1. Be much in thoughtfulness of the *excellency* of the majesty of God and thine infinite, inconceivable distance from him. Many thoughts of it cannot but fill thee with a sense of thine own vileness, which strikes deep at the root of any indwelling sin. When Job comes to a clear discovery of the greatness and the excellency of God, he is filled with self-abhorrence and is pressed to humiliation, Job xlii. 5, 6. And in what state doth the prophet Habakkuk affirm himself to be cast, upon the apprehension of the majesty of God? chap. iii. 16. “With God,” says Job, “is terrible majesty.”* Hence were the thoughts of them of old, that when they had seen God they should die. The Scripture abounds in this self-abasing consideration, comparing the men of the earth to “grasshoppers,” to “vanity,” the “dust of the

* Job xxxvii. 22.

balance," in respect of God.* Be much in thoughts of this nature, to abase the pride of thy heart, and to keep thy soul humble within thee. There is nothing will render thee a greater indisposition to be imposed on by the deceits of sin than such a frame of heart. Think greatly of the greatness of God.

2. Think much of thine *unacquaintedness* with him. Though thou knowest enough to keep thee low and humble, yet how little a portion is it that thou knowest of him! The contemplation hereof cast that wise man into that apprehension of himself which he expresses, Prov. xxx. 2-4, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his Son's name? if thou canst, tell." Labour with this also to take down the pride of thy heart. What dost thou know of God? How little a portion is it! How immense is he in his nature! Canst thou look without terror into the abyss of eternity? Thou canst not bear the rays of his glorious being.

Because I look on this consideration of great use in our walking with God, so far as it may have a consistency with that filial boldness which is given us in Jesus

* Isa. xl. 12-25.

Christ to draw nigh to the throne of grace, I shall further insist upon it, to give an abiding impression of it to the souls of them who desire to walk humbly with God.

Consider, then, I say, to keep thy heart in continual awe of the majesty of God, that persons of the most high and eminent attainment, of the nearest and most familiar communion with God, do yet in this life know but a very little of him and his glory. God reveals his name to Moses,—the most glorious attributes that he hath manifested in the covenant of grace, *Exod.* xxxiv. 5, 6; yet all are but the “back parts” of God. All that he knows by it is but little, low, compared to the perfections of his glory. Hence it is with peculiar reference to Moses that it is said, “No man hath seen God at any time,” *John* i. 18; of him in comparison with Christ doth he speak, verse 17; and of him it is here said, “No man,” no, not Moses, the most eminent among them, “hath seen God at any time.” We speak much of God, can talk of him, his ways, his works, his counsels, all the day long; the truth is, we know very little of him. Our thoughts, our meditations, our expressions of him are low, many of them unworthy of his glory, none of them reaching his perfections.

You will say that Moses was under the law when God wrapped up himself in darkness, and his mind in types and clouds and dark institutions;—under the glorious shining of the gospel, which hath brought life and im-

mortality to light, God being revealed from his own bosom, we now know him much more clearly, and as he is; we see his *face* now, and not his *back parts* only, as Moses did.

Ans. 1. I acknowledge a vast and almost inconceivable difference between the acquaintance we now have with God, after his speaking to us by his own Son,* and that which the generality of the saints had under the law; for although their eyes were as good, sharp, and clear as ours, their faith and spiritual understanding not behind ours, the object as glorious unto them as unto us, yet our day is more clear than theirs was, the clouds are blown away and scattered,† the shadows of the night are gone and fled away, the sun is risen, and the means of sight is made more eminent and clear than formerly. Yet,—

2. That peculiar sight which Moses had of God, Exod. xxxiv., was a *gospel-sight*, a sight of God as “gracious,” etc., and yet it is called but his “back parts;” that is, but low and mean, in comparison of his excellencies and perfections.

3. The apostle, exalting to the utmost this glory of light above that of the law, manifesting that now the “vail” causing darkness is taken away, so that with “open” or uncovered “face‡ we behold the glory of the Lord,” tells us how: “As in a glass,” 2 Cor. iii. 18. “In a glass,” how is that? Clearly, perfectly? Alas,

* Heb. i. 2. † Cant. iv. 6. ‡ Ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ.

no! He tells you how that is, 1 Cor. xiii. 12, "We see through a glass, darkly," saith he. It is not a telescope that helps us to see things afar off, concerning which the apostle speaks; and yet what poor helps are they! how short do we come of the truth of things notwithstanding their assistance! It is a looking-glass whereunto he alludes (where are only obscure species and images of things, and not the things themselves), and a sight therein, that he compares our knowledge to. He tells you also that all that we do see, δι' ἐσόπτρου, "by" or "through this glass," is in αἰνίγματι,—in "a riddle," in darkness and obscurity. And speaking of himself who surely was much more clear-sighted than any now living, he tells us that he saw but ἐκ μέρους,—"in part." He saw but the back parts of heavenly things, verse 12, and compares all the knowledge he had attained of God to that he had of things when he was a child, verse 11. It is a μέρος, short of the τὸ τέλειον yea, such as καταργηθήσεται,—"it shall be destroyed," or done away. We know what weak, feeble, uncertain notions and apprehensions children have of things of any abstruse consideration; how when they grow up with any improvements of parts and abilities, those conceptions vanish, and they are ashamed of them. It is the commendation of a child to love, honour, believe, and obey his father; but for his science and notions, his father knows his childishness and folly. Notwithstanding all our confidence of high attainments, all our notions of God are but childish in

respect of his infinite perfections. We lisp and babble, and say we know not what, for the most part, in our most accurate, as we think, conceptions and notions of God. We may love, honour, believe and obey our Father; and therewith he accepts our childish thoughts, for they are but childish. We see but his back parts; we know but little of him. Hence is that promise wherewith we are so often supported and comforted in our distress, "We shall see him as he is;" we shall see him "face to face;" "know as we are known; comprehend that for which we are comprehended," 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 1 John iii. 2; and positively, "Now we see him not;"—all concluding that here we see but his back parts; not as he is, but in a dark, obscure representation; not in the perfection of his glory.

The queen of Sheba had heard much of Solomon, and framed many great thoughts of his magnificence in her mind thereupon; but when she came and saw his glory, she was forced to confess that the one half of the truth had not been told her. We may suppose that we have here attained great knowledge, clear and high thoughts of God; but, alas! when he shall bring us into his presence we shall cry out, "We never knew him as he is; the thousandth part of his glory, and perfection, and blessedness, never entered into our hearts."

The apostle tells us, 1 John iii. 2, that we know not what we ourselves shall be,—what we shall find ourselves in the issue; much less will it enter into our hearts to

conceive what God is, and what we shall find him to be. Consider either him who is to be known, or the way whereby we know him, and this will further appear:—

(1.) We know so little of *God*, because it is *God* who is thus to be known,—that is, he who hath described himself to us very much by this, that we *cannot* know him. What else doth he intend where he calls himself invisible, incomprehensible and the like?—that is, he whom we do not, cannot, know as he is. And our further progress consists more in knowing what he is not, than what he is. Thus is he described to be immortal, infinite,—that is, he is not, as we are, mortal, finite, and limited. Hence is that glorious description of him, 1 Tim. vi. 16, “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” His light is such as no creature can approach unto. He is not seen, not because he cannot be seen, but because we cannot bear the sight of him. The light of God, in whom is no darkness, forbids all access to him by any creature whatever. We who cannot behold the sun in its glory are too weak to bear the beams of infinite brightness. On this consideration, as was said, the wise man professeth himself “a very beast, and not to have the understanding of a man,” Prov. xxx. 2;—that is, he knew nothing in comparison of God; so that he seemed to have lost all his understanding when once he came to the consideration of him, his work, and his ways.

In this consideration let our souls descend to some particulars :—

[1.] For the *being* of God ; we are so far from a knowledge of it, so as to be able to instruct one another therein by words and expressions of it, as that to frame any conceptions in our mind, with such species and impressions of things as we receive the knowledge of all other things by, is to make an idol to ourselves, and so to worship a god of our own making, and not the God that made us. We may as well and as lawfully hew him out of wood or stone as form him a being in our minds, suited to our apprehensions. The utmost of the best of our thoughts of the being of God is, that we can have no thoughts of it. Our knowledge of a being is but low when it mounts no higher but only to know that we know it not.

[2.] There be *some* things of God which he himself hath taught us to speak of, and to regulate our expressions of them ; but when we have so done, we see not the things themselves ; we know them not. To *believe* and *admire* is all that we attain to. We profess, as we are taught, that God is infinite, omnipotent, eternal ; and we know what disputes and notions there are about omnipresence, immensity, infiniteness, and eternity. We have, I say, words and notions about these things ; but as to the things themselves what do we know ? what do we comprehend of them ? Can the mind of man do any more but swallow itself up in an infinite abyss, which is

as nothing; give itself up to what it cannot conceive, much less express? Is not our understanding “brutish” in the contemplation of such things, and is as if it were not? Yea, the perfection of our understanding is, not to understand, and to rest there. They are but the back parts of eternity and infiniteness that we have a glimpse of. What shall I say of the Trinity, or the subsistence of distinct persons in the same individual essence,—a mystery by many denied, because by none understood,—a mystery, whose every letter is mysterious? Who can declare the generation of the Son, the procession of the Spirit, or the difference of the one from the other? But I shall not further instance in particulars. That infinite and inconceivable distance that is between him and us, keeps us in the dark as to any sight of his face or clear apprehension of his perfections.

We know him rather by what he does than by what he is,—by his doing us good than by his essential goodness; and how little a portion of him, as Job speaks, is hereby discovered!

(2.) We know little of God, because it is *faith* alone whereby here we know him. I shall not now discourse about the remaining impressions on the hearts of all men by nature that there is a God, nor what they may rationally be taught concerning that God from the works of his creation and providence, which they see and behold. It is confessedly, and that upon the woful experience of all ages, so weak, low, dark, confused, that none ever on

that account glorified God as they ought, but, notwithstanding all their knowledge of God, were indeed “without God in the world.”

The chief, and, upon the matter, almost only acquaintance we have with God, and his dispensations of himself, is by faith. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,” Heb. xi. 6. Our knowledge of him and his rewarding (the bottom of our obedience or coming to him), is believing. “We walk by faith, and not by sight,” 2 Cor. v. 7;—*Διὰ πίστεως οὐ διὰ ὁρατοῦ* by faith, and so by faith as not to have any express idea, image, or species of that which we believe. Faith is all the argument we have of “things not seen,” Heb. xi. 1. I might here insist upon the nature of it; and from all its concomitants and concernments manifest that we know but the back parts of what we know by faith only. As to its rise, it is built purely upon the testimony of Him whom we have not seen: as the apostle speaks, “How can ye love him whom ye have not seen?”—that is, whom you know not but by faith that he is. Faith receives all upon *his* testimony, whom it receives to be only on his own testimony. As to its nature, it is an assent upon testimony, not an evidence upon demonstration; and the object of it is, as was said before, above us. Hence our faith, as was formerly observed, is called a “seeing darkly, as in a glass.” All that we know this

way (and all that we know of God we know this way) is but low, and dark, and obscure.

But you will say, "All this is true, but yet it is only so to them that know not God, perhaps, as he is revealed in Jesus Christ; with them who do so it is otherwise. It is true, 'No man hath seen God at any time,' but 'the only begotten Son, he hath revealed him,' John i. 18; and 'the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true,' 1 John v. 20. The illumination of 'the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God,' shineth upon believers, 2 Cor. iv. 4; yea, and 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into their hearts, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of his Son,' verse 6. So that 'though we were darkness,' yet we are now 'light in the Lord,' Eph. v. 8. And the apostle says, 'We all with open face behold the glory of the Lord,' 2 Cor. iii. 18; and we are now so far from being in such darkness, or at such a distance from God, that 'our communion and fellowship is with the Father and with his Son,' 1 John i. 3. The light of the gospel whereby now God is revealed is glorious; not a star, but the sun in his beauty is risen upon us, and the veil is taken from our faces. So that though unbelievers, yea, and perhaps some weak believers, may be in some darkness, yet those of any growth or considerable attainments have a clear sight and view of the face of God in Jesus Christ."

To which I answer,—

[1.] The truth is, we all of us know *enough* of him to love him more than we do, to delight in him and serve him, believe him, obey him, put our trust in him, above all that we have hitherto attained. Our darkness and weakness is no plea for our negligence and disobedience. Who is it that hath walked up to the knowledge that he hath had of the perfections, excellencies, and will of God? God's end in giving us any knowledge of himself here is that we may "glorify him as God;" that is, love him, serve him, believe and obey him,—give him all the honour and glory that is due from poor sinful creatures to a sin-pardoning God and Creator. We must all acknowledge that we were never thoroughly transformed into the image of that knowledge which we have had. And had we used our talents well, we might have been trusted with more.

[2.] *Comparatively*, that knowledge which we have of God by the revelation of Jesus Christ in the gospel is exceeding eminent and glorious. It is so in comparison of any knowledge of God that might otherwise be attained, or was delivered in the law under the Old Testament, which had but the shadow of good things, not the express image of them; this the apostle pursues at large, 2 Cor. iii. Christ hath now in these last days revealed the Father from his own bosom, declared his name, made known his mind, will, and counsel in a far more clear, eminent, distinct manner than he did for-

merly, whilst he kept his people under the pedagogy of the law; and this is that which, for the most part, is intended in the places before mentioned. The clear, perspicuous delivery and declaration of God and his will in the gospel is expressly exalted in comparison of any other way of revelation of himself.

[3.] The difference between believers and unbelievers as to knowledge is not so much in the *matter of their knowledge* as in the *manner of knowing*. Unbelievers some of them, may know more and be able to say more of God, his perfections, and his will, than many believers; but they know nothing as they ought, nothing in a right manner, nothing spiritually and savingly, nothing with a holy, heavenly light. The excellency of a believer is, not that he hath a large apprehension of things, but that what he doth apprehend, which perhaps may be very little, he sees it in the light of the Spirit of God, in a saving, soul-transforming light; and this is that which gives us communion with God, and not prying thoughts or curious-raised notions.

[4.] Jesus Christ by his word and Spirit reveals to the hearts of all his, God as a Father, as a God in covenant, as a rewarder, every way sufficiently to teach us to obey him here, and to lead us to his bosom, to lie down there in the fruition of him to eternity. But yet now,

[5.] Notwithstanding all this, it is but a *little portion* we know of him; we see but his back parts. For,—

1st. The intendment of all gospel revelation is, not to

unveil God's essential glory, that we should see him as he is, but merely to declare so much of him as he knows sufficient to be a bottom of our faith, love, obedience, and coming to him,—that is, of the faith which here he expects from us; such services as beseem poor creatures in the midst of temptations. But when he calls us to eternal admiration and contemplation, without interruption, he will make a new manner of discovery of himself, and the whole shape of things, as it now lies before us, will depart as a shadow.

2dly. We are dull and slow of heart to receive the things that are in the word revealed; God, by our infirmity and weakness, keeping us in continual dependence on him for teachings and revelations of himself out of his word, never in this world bringing any soul to the utmost of what is from the word to be made out and discovered: so that although the way of revelation in the gospel be clear and evident, yet we know little of the things themselves that are revealed.

Let us, then, revive the use and intendment of this consideration: Will not a due apprehension of this inconceivable greatness of God, and that infinite distance wherein we stand from him, fill the soul with a holy and awful fear of him, so as to keep it in a frame unsuited to the thriving or flourishing of any lust whatever? Let the soul be continually wonted to reverential thoughts of God's greatness and omnipresence, and it will be much upon its watch as to any undue deportments.

Consider him with whom you have to do,—even “our God is a consuming fire;” and in your greatest abashments at his presence and eye, know that your very nature is too narrow to bear apprehensions suitable to his essential glory.

CHAPTER XIII.

The NINTH direction: When the heart is disquieted by sin, speak no peace to it until God speak it—Peace, without detestation of sin, unsound; so is peace measured out unto ourselves—How we may know when we measure our peace unto ourselves—Directions as to that inquiry—The vanity of speaking peace slightly; also of doing it on one singular account, not universally.

NINTHLY, In case God disquiet the heart about the guilt of its distempers, either in respect of its root and indwelling, or in respect of any eruptions of it, *take heed thou speakest not peace to thyself before God speaks it; but hearken what he says to thy soul.* This is our next direction, without the observation whereof the heart will be exceedingly exposed to the deceitfulness of sin.

This is a business of great importance. It is a sad thing for a man to deceive his own soul herein. All the warnings God gives us, in tenderness to our souls, to try and examine ourselves, do tend to the preventing of this great evil of speaking peace groundlessly to ourselves; which is upon the issue to bless ourselves, in an opposition to God. It is not my business to insist upon the danger of it, but to help believers to prevent it, and to let them know when they do so.

To manage this direction aright observe,—

1. That as it is the great *prerogative and sovereignty* of God to give grace to whom he pleases ("He hath mercy on whom he will," Rom. ix. 18; and among all the sons of men, he calls whom he will, and sanctifies whom he will), so among those so called and justified, and whom he will save, he yet reserves this privilege to himself, to speak peace to whom he pleaseth, and in what degree he pleaseth, even amongst them on whom he hath bestowed grace. He is the "God of all consolation," in an especial manner in his dealing with believers; that is, of the good things that he keeps locked up in his family, and gives out of it to all his children at his pleasure. ^d This the Lord insists on, Isa. lvii. 16-18. It is the case under consideration that is there insisted on. When God says he will heal their breaches and disconsolations, he assumes this privilege to himself in an especial manner: "I create it," verse 19;—"Even in respect of these poor wounded creatures I create it, and according to my sovereignty make it out as I please."

Hence, as it is with *the collation of grace* in reference to them that are in the state of nature,—God doth it in great curiosity, and his proceedings therein in taking and leaving, as to outward appearances, quite besides and contrary oftentimes to all probable expectations; so is it in his *communications* of peace and joy in reference unto them that are in the state of grace,—he gives them out oftentimes quite besides our expectation, as to any appearing grounds of his dispensations.

2. As God *creates it for whom he pleaseth*, so it is the prerogative of Christ to speak it home to the conscience. Speaking to the church of Laodicea, who had healed her wounds falsely, and spoke peace to herself when she ought not, he takes to himself that title, "I am the Amen, the faithful Witness," Rev. iii. 14. He bears testimony concerning our condition as it is indeed. We may possibly mistake, and trouble ourselves in vain, or flatter ourselves upon false grounds, but he is the "Amen, the faithful Witness;" and what he speaks of our state and condition, that it is indeed. Isa. xi. 3, He is said not to "judge after the sight of his eyes,"—not according to any outward appearance, or any thing that may be subject to a mistake, as we are apt to do; but he shall judge and determine every case as it is indeed.

Take these two previous observations, and I shall give some rules whereby men may know whether God speaks peace to them, or whether they speak peace to themselves only:—

1. Men certainly speak peace to themselves when their so doing is *not attended with the greatest detestation* imaginable of that sin in reference whereunto they do speak peace to themselves, and abhorrency of themselves for it. When men are wounded by sin, disquieted and perplexed, and knowing that there is no remedy for them but only in the mercies of God, through the blood of Christ, do therefore look to him, and to the promises of the covenant in him, and thereupon quiet their hearts

that it shall be well with them, and that God will be exalted, that he may be gracious to them, and yet their souls are not wrought to the greatest detestation of the sin or sins upon the account whereof they are disquieted,—this is to heal themselves, and not to be healed of God. This is but a great and strong wind, that the Lord is nigh unto, but the Lord is not in the wind. When men do truly “look upon Christ whom they have pierced,” without which there is no healing or peace, they will “mourn,” Zech. xii. 10; they will mourn for him, even upon this account, and detest the sin that pierced him. When we go to Christ for healing, faith eyes him peculiarly as one pierced. Faith takes several views of Christ, according to the occasions of address to him and communion with him that it hath. Sometimes it views his holiness, sometimes his power, sometimes his love, sometimes his favour with his Father. And when it goes for healing and peace, it looks especially on the blood of the covenant, on his sufferings; for “with his stripes we are healed, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him,” Isa. liii. 5. When we look for healing, his stripes are to be eyed,—not in the outward story of them, which is the course of popish devotionists, but in the love, kindness, mystery, and design of the cross; and when we look for peace, his chastisements must be in our eye. Now this, I say, if it be done according to the mind of God, and in the strength of that Spirit which is poured out on believers, it will beget a detesta-

tion of that sin or sins for which healing and peace is sought. So Ezek. xvi. 60, 61, "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." And what then? "Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed." When God comes home to speak peace in a sure covenant of it, it fills the soul with shame for all the ways whereby it hath been alienated from him. And one of the things that the apostle mentions as attending that godly sorrow which is accompanied with repentance unto salvation, never to be repented of, is revenge: "Yea, what revenge!" 2 Cor. vii. 11. They reflected on their miscarriages with indignation and revenge, for their folly in them. When Job comes up to a thorough healing, he cries, "Now I abhor myself," Job xlii. 6; and until he did so, he had no abiding peace. He might perhaps have made up himself with that doctrine of free grace which was so excellently preached by Elihu, chap. xxxiii. from verse 14 unto 30; but he had then but skinned his wounds: he must come to self-aborrency if he come to healing. So was it with those in Psa. lxxviii. 33-35, in their great trouble and perplexity, for and upon the account of sin. I doubt not but upon the address they made to God in Christ (for that so they did is evident from the titles they gave him; they call him their Rock and their Redeemer, two words everywhere pointing out the Lord Christ), they spake peace to themselves; but was it sound and abid-

ing? No; it passed away as the early dew. God speaks not one word of peace to their souls. But why had they not peace? Why, because in their address to God, they flattered him. But how doth that appear? Verse 37: "Their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast;" they had not a detestation nor relinquishment of that sin in reference whereunto they spake peace to themselves. Let a man make what application he will for healing and peace, let him do it to the true Physician, let him do it in the right way, let him quiet his heart in the promises of the covenant; yet, when peace is spoken, if it be not attended with the detestation and abhorrency of that sin which was the wound and caused the disquietment, this is no peace of *God's creating*, but of *our own purchasing*. It is but a skinning over the wound, whilst the core lies at the bottom, which will putrefy, and corrupt, and corrode, until it break out again with noisomeness, vexation, and danger. Let not poor souls that walk in such a path as this, who are more sensible of the trouble of sin than of the pollution of uncleanness that attends it; who address themselves for mercy, yea, to the Lord in Christ they address themselves for mercy, but yet will keep the sweet morsel of their sin under their tongue;—let them, I say, never think to have true and solid peace. For instance, thou findest thy heart running out after the world, and it disturbs thee in thy communion with God; the Spirit speaks expressly to thee,—“He that loveth the world, the love

of the Father is not in him.”* This puts thee on dealing with God in Christ for the healing of thy soul, the quieting of thy conscience; but yet, withal, a thorough detestation of the evil itself abides not upon thee; yea, perhaps that is liked well enough, but only in respect of the consequences of it. Perhaps thou mayst be saved, yet as through fire, and God will have some work with thee before he hath done; but thou wilt have little peace in this life,—thou wilt be sick and fainting all thy days, Isa. lvii. 17. This is a deceit that lies at the root of the peace of many professors and wastes it. They deal with all their strength about mercy and pardon, and seem to have great communion with God in their so doing; they lie before him, bewail their sins and follies, that any one would think, yea, they think themselves, that surely they and their sins are now parted; and so receive in mercy that satisfies their hearts for a little season. But when a thorough search comes to be made, there hath been some secret reserve for the folly or follies treated about,—at least, there hath not been that thorough abhorrency of it which is necessary; and their whole peace is quickly discovered to be weak and rotten, scarce abiding any longer than the words of begging it are in their mouths.

2. When men measure out peace to themselves upon the conclusions that their *convictions and rational principles* will carry them out unto, this is a false peace, and

* 1 John ii. 15.

will not abide. I shall a little explain what I mean hereby. A man hath got a wound by sin; he hath a conviction of some sin upon his conscience; he hath not walked uprightly as becometh the gospel; all is not well and right between God and his soul. He considers now what is to be done. Light he hath, and knows what path he must take, and how his soul hath been formerly healed. Considering that the promises of God are the outward means of application for the healing of his sores and quieting of his heart, he goes to them, searches them out, finds out some one or more of them whose literal expressions are directly suited to his condition. Says he to himself, "God speaks in this promise; here I will take myself a plaster as long and broad as my wound;" and so brings the word of the promise to his condition, and sets him down in peace. This is another appearance upon the mount; the Lord is near, but the Lord is not in it. It hath not been the work of the Spirit, who alone can "convince us of sin, and righteousness, and judgment,"* but the mere actings of the intelligent, rational soul. As there are three sorts of lives, we say,—the vegetative, the sensitive, and the rational or intelligent,—some things have only the vegetative; some the sensitive also, and that includes the former; some have the rational, which takes in and supposes both the other. Now, he that hath the rational doth not only act suitably to that principle, but also to both the others,

* John xvi. 8.

—he grows and is sensible. It is so with men in the things of God. Some are mere *natural* and rational men; some have a *superadded* conviction with illumination; and some are truly *regenerate*. Now, he that hath the latter hath also both the former; and therefore he acts sometimes upon the principles of the rational, sometimes upon the principles of the enlightened man. His true spiritual life is not the principle of all his motions; he acts not always in the strength thereof, neither are all his fruits from that root. In this case that I speak of, he acts merely upon the principle of conviction and illumination, whereby his first naturals are heightened; but the Spirit breathes not at all upon these waters. Take an instance: Suppose the wound and disquiet of soul to be upon the account of relapses,—which, whatever the evil or folly be, though for the matter of it never so small, yet there are no wounds deeper than those that are given the soul on that account, nor disquietments greater;—in the perturbation of his mind, he finds out that promise, Isa. lv. 7, “The LORD will have mercy, and our God will abundantly pardon,”—he will multiply or add to pardon, he will do it again and again; or that in Hos. xiv. 4, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.” This the man considers, and thereupon concludes peace to himself; whether the Spirit of God make the application or no, whether that gives life and power to the letter or no, that he regards not. He doth not hearken whether God the Lord speak

peace. He doth not wait upon God, who perhaps yet hides his face, and sees the poor creature stealing peace and running away with it, knowing that the time will come when he will deal with him again, and call him to a new reckoning;* when he shall see that it is in vain to go one step where God doth not take him by the hand.

I see here, indeed, sundry other questions upon this arising and interposing themselves. I cannot apply myself to them all: one I shall a little speak to.

It may be said, then, "Seeing that this seems to be the path that the Holy Spirit leads us in for the healing of our wounds and quieting of our hearts, how shall we know when we go alone ourselves, and when the Spirit also doth accompany us?"

Ans. (1.) If any of you are out of the way upon this account, God will speedily let you know it; for besides that you have his promise, that the "meek he will guide in judgment and teach them his way," Psa. xxv. 9, he will not let you always err. He will, I say, not suffer your nakedness to be covered with fig-leaves, but take them away, and all the peace you have in them, and will not suffer you to settle on such lees. You shall quickly know your wound is not healed; that is, you shall speedily know whether or no it be thus with you, by the event. The peace you thus get and obtain will not abide. Whilst the mind is overpowered by its own convictions,

* Hos. ix. 9.

there is no hold for disquietments to fix upon. Stay a little, and all these reasonings will grow cold and vanish before the face of the first temptation that arises. But,—

(2.) This course is commonly taken without *waiting*; which is the grace, and that peculiar acting of faith which God calls for, to be exercised in such a condition. I know God doth sometimes come in upon the soul instantly, in a moment, as it were, wounding and healing it,—as I am persuaded it was in the case of David, when he cut off the lap of Saul's garment; but ordinarily, in such a case, God calls for* waiting and labouring, attending as the eye of a servant upon his master. Says the prophet Isaiah, chap. viii. 17, "I will wait upon the LORD, who hideth his face from the house of Jacob." God will have his children lie a while at his door when they have run from his house, and not instantly rush in upon him; unless he take them by the hand and pluck them in, when they are so ashamed that they dare not come to him. Now, self-healers, or men that speak peace to themselves, do commonly make haste; they will not tarry; they do not hearken what God speaks, but on they will go to be healed.†

(3.) Such a course, though it may quiet the conscience and the mind, the rational concluding part of the soul, yet it doth not *sweeten* the heart with rest and gracious contentation. The answer it receives is much like that

* Psa. cxxx. 6; cxliii. 2.

† Isa. xxviii. 16.

Elisha gave Naaman, "Go in peace;"* it quieted his mind, but I much question whether it sweetened his heart, or gave him any joy in believing, other than the natural joy that was then stirred in him upon his healing. "Do not my words do good?" saith the Lord, Micah ii. 7. When God speaks, there is not only truth in his words, that may answer the conviction of our understandings, but also they do good; they bring that which is sweet, and good, and desirable to the will and affections; by them the "soul returns unto its rest." Psa. cxvi. 7.

(4.) Which is worst of all, it *amends not the life*, it heals not the evil, it cures not the distemper. When God speaks peace, it guides and keeps the soul that it "turn not again to folly."† When we speak it ourselves, the heart is not taken off the evil; nay, it is the readiest course in the world to bring a soul into a trade of back-sliding. If, upon thy plastering thyself, thou findest thyself rather animated to the battle again than utterly weaned from it, it is too palpable that thou hast been at work with thine own soul, but Jesus Christ and his Spirit were not there. Yea, and oftentimes nature having done its work, will, ere a few days are over, come for its reward; and, having been active in the work of healing, will be ready to reason for a new wounding. In God's speaking peace there comes along so much sweetness, and such a discovery of his love, as is a strong obligation on the soul no more to deal perversely.‡

* 2 Kings v. 19. † Psa. lxxxv. 8. ‡ Luke xxii. 32.

3. We speak peace to ourselves when we do it *slightly*. This the prophet complains of in some teachers: Jer. vi. 14, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly." And it is so with some persons: they make the healing of their wounds a slight work; a look, a glance of faith to the promises does it, and so the matter is ended. The apostle tells us that "the word did not profit" some, because "it was not mixed with faith," Heb. iv. 2,—*μὴ συγκεκραμένως*. "it was not well tempered" and mingled with faith. It is not a mere look to the word of mercy in the promise, but it must be mingled with faith until it is incorporated into the very nature of it; and then, indeed, it doth good unto the soul. If thou hast had a wound upon thy conscience, which was attended with weakness and disquietness, which now thou art freed of, how camest thou so? "I looked to the promises of pardon and healing, and so found peace." Yea, but perhaps thou hast made too much haste, thou hast done it overtly, thou hast not fed upon the promise so as to mix it with faith, to have got all the virtue of it diffused into thy soul; only thou hast done it slightly. Thou wilt find thy wound, ere it be long, breaking out again; and thou shalt know that thou art not cured.

4. Whoever speaks peace to himself upon one account, and at the same time hath another evil of *no less importance* lying upon his spirit, about which he hath had no dealing with God, that man cries "Peace"

when there is none. A little to explain my meaning: A man hath neglected a duty again and again, perhaps, when in all righteousness it was due from him; his conscience is perplexed, his soul wounded, he hath no quiet in his bones by reason of his sin; he applies himself for healing, and finds peace. Yet, in the meantime, perhaps, worldliness, or pride, or some other folly, where-with the Spirit of God is exceedingly grieved, may lie in the bosom of that man, and they neither disturb him nor he them. Let not that man think that any of his peace is from God. Then shall it be well with men, when they have an equal respect to all God's commandments. God will justify us *from* our sins, but he will not justify the least sin *in* us: "He is a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

5. When men of themselves speak peace to their consciences, it is seldom that God speaks *humiliation* to their souls. God's peace is humbling peace, melting peace, as it was in the case of David;* never such deep humiliation as when Nathan brought him the tidings of his pardon.

But you will say, "When may we take the comfort of a promise as our own, in relation to some peculiar wound, for the quieting the heart?"

First, in general, when God speaks it, be it when it will, sooner or later. I told you before, he may do it in the very instant of the sin itself, and that with such

* Psa. li. 1.

irresistible power that the soul must needs receive his mind in it; sometimes he will make us wait longer: but when he speaks, be it sooner or later, be it when we are sinning or repenting, be the condition of our souls what they please, if God speak, he must be received. There is not any thing that, in our communion with him, the Lord is more troubled with us for, if I may so say, than our unbelieving fears, that keep us off from receiving that strong consolation which he is so willing to give us.

But you will say, "We are where we were. When God speaks it, we must receive it—that is true; but how shall we know *when he speaks?*"

(1.) I would we could all practically come up to this, to receive peace when we are convinced that God speaks it, and that it is our duty to receive it. But,—

(2.) There is, if I may so say, a secret instinct in faith, whereby it knows the voice of Christ when he speaks indeed; as the babe leaped in the womb when the blessed Virgin came to Elisabeth, faith leaps in the heart when Christ indeed draws nigh to it. "My sheep," says Christ, "know my voice," John x. 4;—"They know my voice; they are used to the sound of it;" and they know when his lips are opened to them and are full of grace. The spouse was in a sad condition, Cant. v. 2,—asleep in security; but yet as soon as Christ speaks, she cries, "It is the voice of my beloved that speaks!" She knew his voice, and was so

acquainted with communion with him, that instantly she discovers him; and so will you also. If you exercise yourselves to acquaintance and communion with him, you will easily discern between his voice and the voice of a stranger. And take this *κρίτηριον* with you: When he doth speak, he speaks as never man spake; he speaks with power, and one way or other will make your “hearts burn within you,” as he did to the disciples, Luke xxiv. He doth it by “putting in his hand at the hole of the door,” Cant. v. 4,—his Spirit into your hearts to seize on you.

He that hath his senses exercised to discern good or evil, being increased in judgment and experience by a constant observation of the ways of Christ’s intercourse, the manner of the operations of the Spirit, and the effects it usually produceth, is the best judge for himself in this case.

Secondly, If the word of the Lord doth good to your souls, he speaks it; if it humble, if it cleanse, and be useful to those ends for which promises are given,—namely, to endear, to cleanse, to melt and bind to obedience, to self-emptiness, etc. But this is not my business; nor shall I further divert in the pursuit of this direction. Without the observation of it, sin will have great advantages towards the hardening of the heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

The general use of the foregoing directions—The great direction for the accomplishment of the work aimed at: Act faith on Christ—The several ways whereby this may be done—Consideration of the fulness in Christ for relief proposed—Great expectations from Christ—Grounds of these expectations; his mercifulness, his faithfulness—Event of such expectations; on the part of Christ; on the part of believers—Faith peculiarly to be acted on the death of Christ, Rom. vi. 3-6—The work of the Spirit in this whole business.

Now, the considerations which I have hitherto insisted on are rather of things *preparatory* to the work aimed at than such as will *effect* it. It is the heart's due preparation for the work itself, without which it will not be accomplished, that hitherto I have aimed at.

Directions for the work itself are very few; I mean that are peculiar to it. And they are these that follow:—

1. Set faith at work on Christ for the *killing* of thy sin. His blood is the great sovereign remedy for sin-sick souls. Live in this, and thou wilt die a conqueror; yea, thou wilt, through the good providence of God, live to see thy lust dead at thy feet.

But thou wilt say, "How shall faith act itself on Christ for this end and purpose?" I say, Sundry ways:—

(1.) By faith fill thy soul with a due consideration of that *provision* which is laid up in Jesus Christ for this end and purpose, that all thy lusts, this very lust wherewith thou art entangled, may be mortified. By faith ponder on this, that though thou art no way able in or by thyself to get the conquest over thy distemper, though thou art even weary of contending, and art utterly ready to faint, yet that there is enough in Jesus Christ to yield thee relief, Phil. iv. 13. It staid the prodigal, when he was *ready to faint, that yet there was bread enough in his father's house; though he was at a distance from it, yet it relieved him, and staid him, that there it was. In thy greatest distress and anguish, consider that fulness of grace, those riches, those †treasures of strength, might, and help, that are laid up in him for our support, John i. 16; Col. i. 19. Let them come into and abide in thy mind. Consider that he is "exalted and made a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel," Acts v. 31; and if to give repentance, to give mortification, without which the other is not, nor can be. Christ tells us that we obtain purging grace by abiding in him, John xv. 3. To act faith upon the fulness that is in Christ for our supply is an eminent way of abiding in Christ, for both our insition and abode is by faith, Rom. xi. 19, 20. Let, then, thy soul by faith be exercised with such thoughts and apprehensions as these: "I am a poor, weak creature; unstable as water, I can-

* Luke xv. 17.

† Isa. xl. 28-31.

not excel. This corruption is too hard for me, and is at the very door of ruining my soul; and what to do I know not. My soul is become as parched ground, and an habitation of dragons. I have made promises and broken them; vows and engagements have been as a thing of nought. Many persuasions have I had that I had got the victory and should be delivered, but I am deceived; so that I plainly see, that without some eminent succour and assistance, I am lost, and shall be prevailed on to an utter relinquishment of God. But yet, though this be my state and condition, let the hands that hang down be lifted up, and the feeble knees be strengthened.* Behold, the Lord Christ, that hath all fulness of grace in his heart, all fulness of power in his hand, he is able to slay all these his enemies. There is sufficient provision in him for my relief and assistance. He can take my drooping, dying soul and make me more than a conqueror.† ‘Why sayest thou, O my soul, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their

* John i. 16; Matt. xxviii. 18.

† Rom. viii. 37.

strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint,' Isa. xl. 27-31. He can make the 'dry, parched ground of my soul to become a pool, and my thirsty, barren heart as springs of water;' yea, he can make this 'habitation of dragons,' this heart, so full of abominable lusts and fiery temptations, to be a place for 'grass' and fruit to himself," Isa. xxxv. 7. So God staid Paul, under his temptation, with the consideration of the sufficiency of his grace: "My grace is sufficient for thee," 2 Cor. xii. 9. Though he were not immediately so far made partaker of it as to be freed from his temptation, yet the sufficiency of it in God, for that end and purpose, was enough to stay his spirit. I say, then, by faith be much in the consideration of that supply and the fulness of it that is in Jesus Christ, and how he can at any time give thee strength and deliverance. Now, if hereby thou dost not find success to a conquest, yet thou wilt be staid in the chariot, that thou shalt not fly out of the field until the battle be ended; thou wilt be kept from an utter despondency and a lying down under thy unbelief, or a turning aside to false means and remedies, that in the issue will not relieve thee. The efficacy of this consideration will be found only in the practice.

(2.) Raise up thy heart by faith to an *expectation of relief* from Christ. Relief in this case from Christ is like the prophet's vision, Hab. ii. 3, "It is for an ap-

pointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, yet wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Though it may seem somewhat long to thee, whilst thou art under thy trouble and perplexity, yet it shall surely come in the appointed time of the Lord Jesus; which is the best season. If, then, thou canst raise up thy heart to a settled expectation of relief from Jesus Christ, if thine eyes are towards him, "as the eyes of a servant to the hand of his master,"* when he expects to receive somewhat from him,—thy soul shall be satisfied, he will assuredly deliver thee; he will slay the lust, and thy latter end shall be peace. Only look for it at his hand; expect when and how he will do it. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."†

But wilt thou say, "What ground have I to build such an expectation upon, so that I may expect not to be deceived?"

As thou hast necessity to put thee on this course, thou must be relieved and saved this way or none. To whom wilt thou go?‡ So there are in the Lord Jesus innumerable things to encourage and engage thee to this expectation.

For the necessity of it, I have in part discovered it before, when I manifested that this is the work of faith and of believers only. "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing," John xv. 5; speaking with especial

* Psa. cxxiii. 2. † Isa. vii. 9. ‡ John vi. 68.

relation to the purging of the heart from sin, verse 2. Mortification of any sin must be by a supply of grace. Of ourselves we cannot do it. Now, "it hath pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19; that "of his fulness we might receive grace for grace," John i. 16. He is the head from whence the new man must have influences of life and strength, or it will decay every day. If we are "strengthened with might in the inner man,"* it is by "Christ's dwelling in our hearts by faith," Eph. iii. 16, 17. That this work is not to be done without the Spirit I have also showed before. Whence, then, do we expect the Spirit? from whom do we look for him? who hath promised him to us, having procured him for us? Ought not all our expectations to this purpose to be on Christ alone? Let this, then, be fixed upon thy heart, that if thou hast not relief from him, thou shalt never have any. All ways, endeavours, contendings, that are not animated by this expectation of relief from Christ and him only are to no purpose, will do thee no good; yea, if they are any thing but supportments of thy heart in this expectation, or means appointed by himself for the receiving help from him, they are in vain.

Now, further to engage thee to this expectation,—

(1.) Consider his *mercifulness*, tenderness, and kindness, as he is our great High Priest at the right hand of God. Assuredly he pities thee in thy distress. Saith he,

* Col. i. 11.

“as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you,” Isa. lxvi. 13. He hath the tenderness of a mother to a sucking child. Heb. ii. 17, 18, “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” How is the ability of Christ upon the account of his suffering proposed to us? “In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able.” Did the sufferings and temptations of Christ add to his ability and power? Not, doubtless, considered absolutely and in it itself. But the ability here mentioned is such as hath readiness, proneness, willingness to put itself forth, accompanying of it; it is an ability of will against all dissuasions. He is able, having suffered and been tempted, to break through all dissuasions to the contrary, to relieve poor tempted souls: *δύναται βοηθῆσαι*,—“He is able to help.” It is a metonymy of the effect; for, he can now be moved to help, having been so tempted. So chap. iv. 15, 16: “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” The exhortation of verse 16 is the same that I am upon,—namely, that we would entertain ex-

pectations of relief from Christ, which the apostle there calls χάριν εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν, “grace for seasonable help.” “If ever,” says the soul, “help were seasonable, it would be so to me in my present condition. This is that which I long for,—grace for seasonable help. I am ready to die, to perish, to be lost for ever; iniquity will prevail against me, if help come not in.” Says the apostle, “Expect this help, this relief, this grace from Christ.” Yea, but on what account? That which he lays down, verse 15. And we may observe that the word, verse 16, which we have translated to “obtain,” is λάβωμεν—ἵνα λάβωμεν ἔλεον, “That we may receive it;” suitable and seasonable help will come in. I shall freely say, this one thing of establishing the soul by faith in expectation of relief from Jesus Christ,* on the account of his mercifulness as our high priest, will be more available to the ruin of thy lust and distemper, and have a better and speedier issue, than all the rigidest means of self-maceration, that ever any of the sons of men engaged themselves unto. Yea, let me add, that never any soul did or shall perish by the power of any lust, sin, or corruption, who could raise his soul by faith to an expectation of relief from Jesus Christ.†

(2.) Consider his *faithfulness* who hath promised; which may raise thee up and confirm thee in this waiting in an expectation of relief. He hath promised to relieve in such cases, and he will fulfil his word to the utmost.

* Matt. xi. 28.

† Isa. lv. 1–3; Rev. iii. 18.

God tells us that his covenant with us is like the “ordinances” of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, which have their certain courses, Jer. xxxi. 36. Thence David said that he watched for relief from God “as one watched for the morning,”*—a thing that will certainly come in its appointed season. So will be thy relief from Christ. It will come in its season, as the dew and rain upon the parched ground; for faithful is he who hath promised. Particular promises to this purpose are innumerable; with some of them, that seem peculiarly to suit his condition, let the soul be always furnished.

Now, there are two eminent advantages which always attend this expectation of succour from Jesus Christ:—

[1.] It engages him to a full and speedy assistance. Nothing doth more engage the heart of a man to be useful and helpful to another than his expectation of help from him, if justly raised and countenanced by him who is to give the relief. Our Lord Jesus hath raised our hearts, by his kindness, care, and promises, to this expectation; certainly our rising up unto it must needs be a great engagement upon him to assist us accordingly. This the Psalmist gives us as an approved maxim, “Thou, LORD, never forsakest them that put their trust in thee.” When the heart is once won to rest in God, to repose himself on him, he will assuredly satisfy it. He will never be as water that fails; nor hath he said at any time to the seed of Jacob, “Seek ye my face in vain.”

* Psa. cxxx. 6.

If Christ be chosen for the foundation of our supply, he will not fail us.

[2.] It engages the heart to attend diligently to all the ways and means whereby Christ is wont to communicate himself to the soul; and so takes in the real assistance of all graces and ordinances whatever. He that expects any thing from a man, applies himself to the ways and means whereby it may be obtained. The beggar that expects an alms lies at his door or in his way from whom he doth expect it. The way whereby and the means wherein Christ communicates himself is, and are, his ordinances ordinarily; he that expects any thing from him must attend upon him therein. It is the expectation of faith that sets the heart on work. It is not an idle, groundless hope that I speak of. If now there be any vigour, efficacy, and power in prayer or sacrament to this end of mortifying sin, a man will assuredly be interested in it all by this expectation of relief from Christ. On this account I reduce all particular actings, by prayer, meditation, and the like, to this head; and so shall not further insist on them, when they are grounded on this bottom and spring from this root. They are of singular use to this purpose, and not else.

Now, on this direction for the mortification of a prevailing distemper you may have a thousand "probatum est's." Who have walked with God under this temptation, and have not found the use and success of it? I dare leave the soul under it, without adding any more.

Only some particulars relating thereunto may be mentioned:—

First, Act faith *peculiarly upon the death*, blood, and cross of Christ; that is, on Christ as crucified and slain. Mortification of sin is peculiarly from the death of Christ. It is one peculiar, yea, eminent end of the death of Christ, which shall assuredly be accomplished by it. He died to destroy the works of the devil. Whatever came upon our natures by his first temptation, whatever receives strength in our persons by his daily suggestions, Christ died to destroy it all. “He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” Tit. ii. 14. This was his aim and intendment (wherein he will not fail) in his giving himself for us. That we might be freed from the power of our sins, and purified from all our defiling lusts, was his design. “He gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish,” Eph. v. 25–27. And this, by virtue of his death, in various and several degrees, shall be accomplished. Hence our washing, purging, and cleansing is everywhere ascribed to his blood, 1 John i. 7; Heb. i. 3; Rev. i. 5. That being sprinkled on us, “purges our consciences from dead works to serve the living God,” Heb. ix. 14. This is that we aim at, this we are in pursuit of,—that our con-

sciences may be purged from dead works, that they may be rooted out, destroyed, and have place in us no more. This shall certainly be brought about by the death of Christ; there will virtue go out from thence to this purpose. Indeed, all supplies of the Spirit, all communications of grace and power, are from hence; as I have elsewhere showed.* Thus the apostle states it; Rom. vi. 2, is the case proposed that we have in hand: "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"—"Dead to sin by profession; dead to sin by obligation to be so; dead to sin by participation of virtue and power for the killing of it; dead to sin by union and interest in Christ, in and by whom it is killed: how shall we live therein?" This he presses by sundry considerations, all taken from the death of Christ, in the ensuing verses. This must not be: verse 3, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" We have in baptism an evidence of our implantation into Christ; we are baptized into him: but what of him are we baptized into an interest in? "His death," saith he—If indeed we are baptized into Christ, and beyond outward profession, we are baptized into his death. The explication of this, of one being baptized into the death of Christ, the apostle gives us, verses 4, 6: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk

* Communion with Christ, vol. ii. chapters vii. viii.

in newness of life. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." "This is," saith he, "our being baptized into the death of Christ, namely, our conformity thereunto; to be dead unto sin, to have our corruptions mortified, as he was put to death for sin: so that as he was raised up to glory, we may be raised up to grace and newness of life." He tells us whence it is that we have this baptism into the death of Christ, verse 6; and this is from the death of Christ itself: "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed;" συνεσταυρώθη, "is crucified with him," not in respect of time, but causality. We are crucified with him *meritoriously*, in that he procured the Spirit for us to mortify sin; *efficiently*, in that from his death virtue comes forth for our crucifying; in the way of a *representation* and *exemplar* we shall assuredly be crucified unto sin, as he was for our sin. This is that the apostle intends: Christ by his death destroying the works of the devil, procuring the Spirit for us, hath so killed sin, as to its reign in believers, that it shall not obtain its end and dominion.

Secondly, Then act faith on the death of Christ, and that under these two notions,—first, In expectation of *power*; secondly, In endeavours for *conformity*.* For the first, the direction given in general may suffice; as to the latter, that of the apostle may give us some light

* Phil. iii. 10; Col. iii. 3; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

into our direction, Gal. iii. 1. Let faith look on Christ in the gospel as he is set forth dying and crucified for us. Look on him under the weight of our sins, praying, bleeding, dying; bring him in that condition into thy heart by faith; apply his blood so shed to thy corruptions: do this daily.* I might draw out this consideration to a great length, in sundry particulars, but I must come to a close.

2. I have only, then, to add the heads of the work of the Spirit in this business of mortification, which is so peculiarly ascribed to him.

In one word: This whole work, which I have described as our duty, is effected, carried on, and accomplished by the power of the Spirit, in all the parts and degrees of it; as,—

(1.) He alone *clearly and fully convinces* the heart of the evil and guilt and danger of the corruption, lust, or sin to be mortified. Without this conviction, or whilst it is so faint that the heart can wrestle with it or digest it, there will be no thorough work made. An unbelieving heart (as in part we have all such) will shift with any consideration, until it be overpowered by clear and evident convictions. Now this is the proper work of the Spirit: “He convinces of sin,” John xvi. 8; he alone can do it. If men’s rational considerations, with the preaching of the letter, were able to convince them of sin, we should, it may be, see more convictions than we do. There

* 1 Cor. xv. 3; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, v. 1, 2; Col. i. 13, 14.

comes by the preaching of the word an apprehension upon the understandings of men that they are sinners, that such and such things are sins, that themselves are guilty of them ; but this light is not powerful, nor doth it lay hold on the practical principles of the soul, so as to conform the mind and will unto them, to produce effects suitable to such an apprehension. And therefore it is that wise and knowing men, destitute of the Spirit, do not think those things to be sins at all wherein the chief movings and actings of lust do consist. It is the Spirit alone that can do, that doth, this work to the purpose. And this is the first thing that the Spirit doth in order to the mortification of any lust whatever,—it convinces the soul of all the evil of it, cuts off all its pleas, discovers all its deceits, stops all its evasions, answers its pretences, makes the soul own its abomination, and lie down under the sense of it. Unless this be done all that follows is in vain.

(2.) The Spirit alone reveals unto us *the fulness of Christ* for our relief ; which is the consideration that stays the heart from false ways and from despairing despondency, 1 Cor. ii. 8.

(3.) The Spirit alone *establishes* the heart in expectation of relief from Christ ; which is the great sovereign means of mortification, as hath been discovered, 2 Cor. i. 21.

(4.) The Spirit alone brings the *cross* of Christ into

our hearts with its sin-killing power; for by the Spirit are we baptized into the death of Christ.

(5.) The Spirit is the author and finisher of our *sanctification*; gives new supplies and influences of grace for holiness and sanctification, when the contrary principle is weakened and abated, Eph. iii. 16-18.

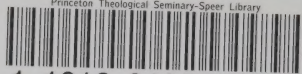
(6.) In all the soul's addresses to God in this condition, it hath *supportment* from the Spirit. Whence is the power, life, and vigour of prayer? whence its efficacy to prevail with God? Is it not from the Spirit? He is the "Spirit of supplications" promised to them "who look on him whom they have pierced," Zech. xii. 10, enabling them "to pray with sighs and groans that cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26. This is confessed to be the great medium or way of faith's prevailing with God. Thus Paul dealt with his temptation, whatever it were: "I besought the Lord that it might depart from me."* What is the work of the Spirit in prayer, whence and how it gives us assistance and makes us to prevail, what we are to do that we may enjoy his help for that purpose, is not my present intendment to demonstrate.

* 2 Cor. xii. 8.

THE END.

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